

# The Inventor

by Epic Dragon Trainer

Category: How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Adventure, Humor

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2013-03-29 22:02:22

Updated: 2014-07-16 02:56:08

Packaged: 2016-04-26 13:46:41

Rating: T

Chapters: 23

Words: 51,965

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: Hiccup is nothing more than the village blacksmith's apprentice. Or is he? As his inventions start to get him noticed by both humans and dragons, it is clear that there is more to Hiccup than meets the eye. A war brews in the aftermath of his life-changing choice. Can the Inventor think his way out of an impending 4-way war?

## 1. Dragons Everywhere

### Chapter 1: Dragons Everywhere

This is Berk. It's located solidly on the Meridian of Misery, and two days south of freezing. It is a highly mountainous island with a charming view of the sunset. The only problems are the pests. While other people might have rats or wolves, we have dragons.

Yup, dragons, huge, scaly, fire-breathing monsters that seemed to have been created to do nothing but make our lives miserable. They raid the village every month or so, taking loads of livestock and wrecking the houses. In fact, this village has been around for seven generations, but every building is new. It adds some spice to the village, I'll give it that, but nothing stands very long.

My name is Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, known mostly around the village as either 'The Useless' or 'The Inventor'. You can probably guess which one I obviously preferred. I was a weaker viking, with little muscle or talent for using weapons, so it was kind of obvious how I became to be known 'The Useless', as we kind of lived in a warring community. But I did use my mind much more, and I had a knack for inventing and crafting, and some of my inventions were used around the village regularly, earning me the nickname 'The Inventor'.

I was running from my house when I was nearly smacked off of my feet by an angry viking who was running after a Deadly Nadder.

"Morning," he said before running off after the Nadder. Well, this was pretty much a typical Monday for me, and I ran toward the forge.

I was apprenticed there since I was little, er well, littler. Gobber, who had an interchangeable arm which he used for every kind of purpose around the forge, was hard at work hammering out bent swords and axes from the raid. I swear, it's like some idiot just walked up to a dragons and begged them to just smash the swords to pieces.

I grabbed my apron from the wall and went right to work sharpening swords.

"Well look who decided to join the party. I was afraid you had been carried off," said Gobber.

"Who, me? No, I'm way too muscular for their tastes," I said, gesturing toward my nonexistent muscles.

"Well, they'd need toothpicks, don't they?" said Gobber, hammering another sword.

"Bola!" called a viking at the counter. I grabbed a bola from the corner and hauled it up to the counter, straining my arm in the process. I needed to get some more muscle.

The viking grabbed it and hurled it at a gronkle that was flying by, and then he ran after it to kill it. Man I wish I could do that, but I had to stick to machines that could do that for me. Speaking of which, there was something that I wanted to with this raid here.

"Hey Gobber, I'm going to go test out my bola launcher over by the cliff. Don't have too much fun without me," I said.

"Not so fast Hiccup. You know I promised your father that I would look after you, and I'm not letting you go out there to risk your life just to test some machine," said Gobber.

"Yeah. But if I get it right, it could be really useful. Come on Gobber, one time. It's not like I'm going to go hand to hand with a dragon. You know me, I'm not that stupid," said Hiccup.

"Alright, but if your dad asks, you ran off without my knowledge," said Gobber.

"Fine." I grabbed the bola launcher, which I had nicknamed the Mangler, and wheeled it through the village. It looked almost like a wheelbarrow, but instead of the barrow part, it was more of a...log. Inside were all the components, but from the outside it just looked like I was wheeling a log.

I heard exasperated shouts behind me.

"What are you doing out?"

"Get back inside!"

"Hide yourself boy!"

It was quite common knowledge around the village that I was Gobber's apprentice, and that my father always wanted e protected. It was also common knowledge that I could get myself into mischief and not follow the rules. Personally, I just didn't care. I had my own rules, and everything I did I did to gain some recognition from my father, who treated me like I was just a fragile glass sculpture that couldn't do my own thing.

I set up the Mangler on the cliff overlooking the ocean, my aims set on the most reclusive of all dragons, the night fury. I was close to one of the catapult towers, and the night fury liked to destroy those. They also lit up the night when they exploded, so I would get an even clearer shot.

I waited and waited, but nothing came. "Come on, come on, give me something to shoot at," I muttered at the dark sky. Suddenly, out of nowhere, an explosion rocked the earth, and the catapult tower went up in a pillar of fire. A dark shape flitted into my field of vision, and I knew that I had it.

I aimed quickly, knowing I would only get one shot, and fired. I had never expected such a kickback on the machine, and it threw me backward. I got up and heard a screech and saw a dark shape fall from the sky toward Raven Point.

"I hit it? Yes I hit it! It works!" I said, reloading the Mangler and spinning around, hoping to get a shot at another dragon. I looked into the viewfinder, and all I saw was a dark red muzzle. I looked up and saw a rather angry looking Monstrous Nightmare staring me in the face.

"Oh gods!" I yelled before running as fast as I could in the other direction. The Nightmare roared loudly and smashed the Mangler before chasing after me.

Now if there was one thing I was good at beside inventing was running. I ran with all that my legs had, but the Nightmare was damn fast. I tried to lose it in the maze of houses and piers that made up Berk, but the Nightmare just blasted its way through. It shot its forth shot at me, and it whizzed by my face, sizzling my eyebrows. I mentally counted 'four' knowing that a Nightmare had a shot limit of seven.

We danced a merry chase around the village, running through the crowded streets. There were shouts from angry vikings as we ran past, knocking over everything and everyone in our path. I had only one hope of getting rid of the creature, and that was to use one of my more signature moves, but I could only do it one place. It was a crazy, stupid plan, but it could work, and I had to try. I was getting tired.

I ran to the spot, a cliff face that overlooked the docks. I leaped from the cliff at a full run, knowing what lay right below me. There was an old awning from a former merchant's shop that lay right below that cliff face, and if I hit it just right, I'd survive the landing. I hit the awning going full speed, and I bounced straight up, landing on something scaly and hard. My heart leapt to my throat.

I was on the back of the Nightmare, clinging on with both hands onto its back spines. Apparently it had followed me, and my bounce landed

me right on its back. I was scared for my life, but I tried to make no sound so as to not alert to the monster that I was on its back. But, just as my luck would have it, he could feel me there. And if he felt me, then there was only one way that this could end. With my ass on fire.

I heard the telltale tiny hissing noise that signaled that a Nightmare was going to light itself on fire. Strangely, I was the only one that ever noticed it, but it always happened a second before it happened. I jumped off of its back just as it lit itself on fire, landing at the base of a torch pole.

The Nightmare, seeing that I had jumped off, circled around, trying to find me, but I hid behind the pole. I poked my head around, trying to find where the dragon had gone, but then I heard a snort from behind me.

"Oh the gods hate me," I muttered, spinning around quickly and flinging a powder from the pouch that I always kept on me. It was a sleeping powder that I had developed, but it took time to work, and it only worked at close range. The dragon recoiled at the weird powder, its actions quickly growing sluggish and weak. It stumbled around for a while, but it then collapsed in a heap. I had it. This was my moment to shine.

I was about to go up and kill the dragon with my knife, bring pride to my village, when out of nowhere, my dad, Stoick the Vast, chief of the tribe, ran into the dragon. And I mean ran into it and tripped over it. It was hilarious, but unfortunately, it woke the dragon from its slumber. My dad quickly smashed his hammer over the beast's head, crushing its skull. The dragon collapsed again, but this time from the chronic condition of being dead.

Then Stoick turned on me. "What do you think you were doing out? And going after a Nightmare? Do you have a death wish?" yelled Stoick.

I simply rolled my eyes. "No, I was testing out my new bola launcher. I shot down a night fury, but then this brute over here ran up in front of me and kept following me. I used some of the more...potent skills in my arsenal. I almost had him before you showed up," I said, sifting some of the black sleeping powder through my hands.

"Hiccup, you know that you're supposed to stay with Gobber. You are many things Hiccup, but a dragon killer is not one of them. You'll learn that some day. You have a different calling. Work on your inventions, work with Gobber. You'll be chief come day, but you won't be a warrior," said Stoick, who promptly walked away, leaving me with the dead Nightmare.

Or at least I thought that he was dead. Just as I was walking away, I saw the dragon open an eye to me, a big, yellow reptilian eye. The eye held so much emotion, like it felt sorry for me for what my father said, almost like it had forgiven me for letting it die, and I could swear that I saw that it knew something about me. Something that I didn't even know, something deep within that he could somehow see in me. The final emotion that surprised me a little bit was...freedom. I had no idea why, but I knew that it was true. It spooked me something fierce, and luckily the eye winked out and I saw the dragon breath its last.

I walked back to the forge after the raid, still rattled about what that dragon's eye had done to me. It was crazy, to think that the vicious brutes who raided our home had any kind of emotion or feeling, but I would swear on every god I knew that that look that the Nightmare had given me held emotion, so much emotion. I shuddered. Best just to forget everything.

When I arrived at the forge, I went back to my own private workshop where I held all of the notes and pages on my many inventions and ideas. I brought out the Mangler design and wrote some more notes on it, some things I had noticed when firing it. I then set about making another prototype. The one I had used had been smashed by the Nightmare, so I needed a new one.

The process was a long one, that required much metal and wood working, but the results were worth it. I had to present the idea to Gobber and my dad when I had it perfected. It could be useful against raids in the future. I thought of a demonstration, and then I remembered the night fury that I had shot down. It was still out there, and I had to find it. No one had ever killed a night fury, let alone seen one, and I was going to be the first. I grabbed my notebook and headed out the door, running as fast as I could. I knew the general location of where it had gone down, so I headed there.

After hours of searching, I had come up with nothing. Zilch. Nada. I scribbled over all the X's I had made in my notebook.

"Oh, the gods hate me. Some people lose a knife or a mug, but no! I lose an entire dragon!" I yelled and smacked a tree branch, but it sprung right back at me, slamming into my face. It stung, and I put my hand to my face to subdue the pain. That's when I noticed the tree that it had come from.

It was bent into an almost perfect ninety degree angle, almost perfectly parallel with the ground. The trees that were next to it were bent and broken too, and they all led in the same central direction. I followed the direction of the crashed trees excitedly, knowing that at the other side would be a night fury.

I followed the trees to a large boulder, where all of a sudden the broken trees stopped. I looked over the boulder, and what I saw took my breath away.

It was the night fury, jet black all over, and surprisingly small. I had always imagined it looking larger, but the thing was smaller than a Nightmare, longer maybe, but definitely smaller. It looked lithe, agile, except for the ropes that wrapped around its body. My bola.

"Yes, I did it! This is the night fury, and I will go down in legend as the first person to kill it," I said triumphantly. "Alright dragon, I'm going to kill you and bring you head back to my father and prove to him that I am a dragon killer. I am a warrior!" I yelled loud enough to startle the birds in the trees.

The dragons eyes flashed open, connecting with mine. Those deep, revealing forest green eyes, eyes, like the Nightmare, held so much almost human emotion. Deep down, I knew that it was wrong. I couldn't kill this creature that looked just like I did, scared out of my mind

and giving up. I just couldn't do it. I looked at my handiwork and muttered, "I did this."

Before I could think about what I was doing, I was cutting the bonds of the dragon, one strand at a time. I watched the dragon's eyes, and I saw the confusion in its face. When the last strand snapped, it leaped up and pinned me to the boulder. I just stared into its eyes, trying not to show fear, but it was pretty hard as I was almost wetting my pants with terror.

The dragon stared at me, and then got off my chest, roaring an almighty roar, and then flying off, crashing into just about every tree along the way.

I just passed out from the mental strain of it all.

\*\*So yeah, this is my own version of a movie adaptation, but it will deviate pretty majorly from the main plot, so stay with me. It'll get really good I promise. Please review, I love the feedback. Also, be sure to check out my other story The Lightning Rider. It's a great story, and I will be working on these two in tandem, but I work quickly, and I usually bust out one chapter in a sitting, which takes about an hour. Enjoy!\*\*

## 2. New Friends

### Chapter 2: New Friends

I woke up to see a scaly reptilian head poking me in the face. It was an odd sensation, something I can't say that I had ever experienced before. I opened my eyes, taking in my surroundings. It was around noon, and I was lying by the boulder where I had freed the night fury. It wasn't anywhere in sight, so what had poked me earlier?

I looked down to my side, where I felt the same scaly touch. I almost recoiled in shock when I saw a Terrible Terror sniffing me curiously. I remained very still, acutely aware of what the small little thing could do. I had been attacked by one when I was ten, and I still bore the scars of that attack, as well as a few burns. I didn't want to upset the creature, because I knew that it would only spell bad news for me.

The Terror seemed extremely interested in my bag, sniffing it and pawing at it like there was no tomorrow. I took the risk and grabbed the bag, which I had slung on my shoulder. I waved the bag back and forth, and the Terror followed it like a dog would. I had no idea what it was after until I looked inside.

I had to smile. I had some of Gobber's famous 'fish jerky', a disgusting attempt at cooking by Gobber. It was essentially over dried and overly salted fish strips, which I had never taken the liberty to get rid of. I took one piece out, and I saw the Terrible Terror's head perk up, it's nostrils working like crazy.

I leaned down, holding out the piece of fish jerky, all the while wondering why. I had just freed a dragon instead of killing it, and now I was feeding a Terror fish jerky. If I haven't mentioned it yet, my life is more than a little strange.

The Terror scurried as fast as it could to get the piece of jerky. It snatched the jerky right out of my hand, gulping it down, and then sitting on its haunches and looking at me for more. I laughed and fished out another piece, which it readily gulped down.

What the dragon did next surprised me so much I almost pinched myself to see if I was dreaming. The dragon walked over to me and cuddled up right in my lap, just like a little lap dog. I was astounded. This was the crazy, man hating creature that my father always tried to warn me about? From what I had seen that day, dragons were much more than we thought they were. So much more.

I sat there with the dragon for a while, but when I noticed that it was getting dark, I knew that I needed to head home. I stood up, and the dragon opened its eyes, blinking curiously. It warbled and clicked its tongue, something that I had seen other dragons do to each other, but I had no idea what it meant. Is it some sort of language or something? Could dragons communicate with each other? Could everything he know be absolutely and totally wrong? Only time would tell.

I walked in the direction of the village, and the Terror followed me, flying right at my shoulder. I tried to shoo the dragon away, but it was intent on following me. I knew that every viking in the village would react violently if they saw the Terror with me, so I had to keep it hidden. Luckily, when we got in sight of the village, the Terror flew away, leaving me alone to walk the last 200 feet home.

I walked back home, my head reeling. So much had happened, and he had so many questions and next to no answers. He just needed some sleep to clear his head.

I tried to sneak up the stairs into my room, but my dad heard me.

"Son, there's something I need to talk to you about," said Stoick.

Better get this over with, I thought. "Yeah, me too dad."

"I've decided that I don't want to fight dragons," I said.

At the same time, my dad said, "I've decided to let you fight dragons."

"What," we both said at the same time again.

"You first," I said.

"You get your wish. Dragon training. You start in the morning," said Stoick.

I cringed. Dragon training? But I had just discovered myself that I couldn't kill dragons, that I had even befriended one. "Ooh, man, I should've gone first. You know, I was thinking that I could just stick to inventing and working with Gobber like you said," I replied, trying to avoid dragon training.

"You'll need this," he said, grabbing an ax off of the wall and handing it to me. It was way too heavy for me, and the weight almost

bowled me over.

"Are you even listening? I can't kill dragons," I said.

"But you will kill dragons."

"No, I'm pretty sure that I won't."

"Listen son, you've always wanted to kill dragons. You can become one of us, instead of being, well, this," said Stoick, gesturing to my whole body.

"You do realize you just gestured to all of me, right?" I said, rolling my eyes.

"Yes, because if you want to become one of us, you'll become one of us. You'll walk like us, talk like us, and think like us."

"And smell like you," I said under my breath, silently laughing at my own joke.

"Now, I'm leaving for a nest search. I'll be back, probably," said Stoick, grabbing his helmet and closing the door.

"And I'll be here, maybe?" I said, phrasing it almost as a question. I had no idea if I would survive dragon training. It scared me, even if I did already have experience and some very good weapons.

The next morning, bright and early, we began training, which was taught by none other than Gobber himself.

"Gobber? Your teaching?" I asked.

"Yes, I was one of the greatest warriors in all of Berk, still am, but when you only have two limbs, mobility is rather tough," he said to me. Looking back to the rest of the class, all teens about my age. There was Snotlout, my obnoxious cousin, the twins Ruffnut and Tuffnut, The gently giant Fishlegs, and then the beautiful Astrid. Ah, Astrid, she was the most amazing girl in all of Berk, even if she didn't acknowledge my existence. "Now class, behind these doors are some of the many species you will learn to fight."

Gobber ran through the list, with Fishlegs giving all the stats for each dragon, which grew really annoying really fast. When Gobber reached the Gronkle, he rested his hand on lever, as if he were going to pull it.

"Oh, almost forgot. Hiccup, hand 'em over son," said Gobber, gesturing to me.

"I don't understand," I said, trying to act innocent.

"You know what I mean."

I sighed, and reluctantly pulled out several of my own inventions that would have helped me greatly. My pouch of sleeping powder, a small sleeping dart and blowgun, a portable bola launcher, something I had made based off of the Mangler design, a slingshot, some sand, and last but not least, my knife. The knife was rather special as it had a few...unique features that made it extremely useful. I handed



over the plethora of items over to Gobber, while everyone else just stood and stared.

"What, I come prepared," I said.

"Ah, you can keep the knife lad. That will help you, especially since you can't swing this," he said, swinging the ax that my dad had given me. "Now, let's get started shall we," said Gobber, pulling down the lever.

"Wait, aren't you going to teach us first?" yelled Snotlout, running away from the gronkle.

"You guys really don't know Gobber, do you?" I said, laughing.

"Eh, I believe in learning on the job. Quick, what's the first thing that you'll need?" said Gobber.

"A shield," I said quickly, remembering all that Gobber had already told me.

"Good, go!" yelled Gobber, and everyone scrambled for a shield. I just ran by Gobber and snatched up an odd, strapped, circular device and strapped it to his arm. I flicked the catch open, and the circular disk expanded until he was holding a full sized metal circular shield.

"Thanks for holding onto this for me Gobber," I said, running after the gronkle.

"No problem. Remember, if you get blasted, your dead," said Gobber.

The twins were the first out, because they had decided to get into a fistfight over a shield rather than focus on the angry dragon racing toward them. Fishlegs was next when he got distracted by talking to Gobber about the gronkles stats. Snotlout quickly followed after being distracted by Astrid. So that left only me and Astrid.

We were both pretty agile and quick, so we managed to dodge around the dragon and it's attacks. Astrid was pulling off some ridiculous stunts, flips and cartwheels, while I was more focused on staying alive. The dragons was racing toward me, and I saw the telltale orange gas at the back of its throat and I knew it was going to fire at me. So, being me, I did the smart thing. I ran right at it.

The gronkle looked confused, but it fired anyway. I jumped up, dodging the blast, but finding myself on the back of the gronkle.

"Oh great. How many times is this going to happen to me?" I asked myself before the gronkle proceeded to smash me into the wall. I slumped to the ground, almost unconscious. The gronkle had one shot left, and it was going to use it to take my head off.

Right before it shot, Gobber grabbed it by the mouth and diverted it's head, making it hit the wall instead of my face.

"Go back to bed, you overgrown sausage!" he yelled at the gronkle before slamming it back in its cage.

"You'll get another chance, don't you worry, but remember, a dragon will always, ALWAYS, go for the kill," said Gobber.

"So why didn't you?" I asked myself, back at the boulder where I had met the night fury. The Terror had come back, and it followed right behind me at the shoulder. "I need to find it. I need to know why. Come on Forge, let's find ourselves a night fury." Forge is what I named the Terror, and it seemed to like the name. I shook my head. "I must be going insane, but whatever."

I followed the erratic flight path that the night fury had made, and it lead me to a small walled in cove. Nothing was in it but a small pond and some trees.

"Well, this was stupid, what do you think Forge?" I asked the small dragon who had perched on my right shoulder. I got no answer but the same warbling and clicking, along with a hiss or two. I needed to figure out that language that they spoke in.

I jumped down into the cove. It was a high jump, and I nearly broke my leg on the way down. I managed to collect myself, but my ankle still hurt me. I limped around the cove, looking for any signs of life, but nothing showed.

"Hm, well, this cove would be a great place to test out a few of my inventions, wouldn't you agree Forge? In fact, I think I'll grab a few to test in here. It's sheltered, far away, and there's plenty of water. Yeah I think that's what I'll do." I made to climb out of the cove, but I couldn't climb up the rock face. I didn't have a whole lot of muscle.

"Well, when you can't go over it, just go through it," I muttered, pulling out a putty from my pack that I had made. It was an interesting mix, discovered quite by accident, but it had quite explosive properties when lit. I set the putty in place by a weaker looking rock that was blocking an opening that I could use to get out. I set the fuse, and I tried to light it with my flint, but I was never good with starting fires. I only got sparks, and they didn't catch on the fuse.

"Dammit! Light already!" I screamed in frustration. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a burst of fire flew from behind my ear and lit the fuse. My eyes widened in surprise, and then fear when I realized that the fuse was lit. I ran as fast as I could, and I only just got myself out of the way before the putty exploded.

The blast wave threw me forward, and I skidded on my face. When I got up, I saw that the putty had done its job. The boulder was nothing more than a few scattered hunks of rock, and there was a clear way out.

"Alright Forge, let's go. I'm going to go grab those inventions, but you stay here, okay? I can't let anyone know about you."

I walked in the direction of the village, and I heard Forge's wing flapping right behind me. I turned around to yell at him, but his eyes were just so innocent, I couldn't do it to him.

"Oh alright, you can come, but stay hidden, or someone will kill

you."

Forge looked at me with fear and hid in my vest. I tried to act casual, or as casual as you can when you have a fire breathing lizard in your vest. You know, for being a cold-blooded reptile, he sure was warm. I grabbed the few inventions I wanted to test and wheeled them all to the cove, and no one stopped me, although several people gave me some strange looks.

When I got to the cove, I set about testing. I was readying one invention when I heard a growl from behind me. A very familiar growl. The night fury was right behind me.

### 3. Finding Trust in the Strangest of Places

#### Chapter 3: Finding Trust in the Strangest of Places

I slowly turned around, and right in my face were those eyes again. Those big, green eyes that I had gazed into before, those eyes that reminded me so much of myself. They were opened wide, the pupils dilated, looking more curious than angry. I nearly soiled my pants, but I tried to show no fear. This was the night fury I was looking at, the unholy offspring of lightning and death itself. I tried to make no sudden movements, but that's hard to do when you're shaking like a leaf.

The dragon and I just stood there staring at each other, neither moving an inch. Without warning, the night fury's head bent down to sniff at my bag. I had to smile. So he had a taste for Gobber's disgusting fish jerky too. I back off a little and the dragon followed. I pulled out a strip of the jerky and dangled it in front of its nose. It opened its mouth which was, quite to my surprise, toothless.

"Toothless, huh. I could have sworn that you had..." I said, but I was cut off as teeth flashed out its gums and chomped down on the jerky, upchucking it and swallowing it whole.

"Teeth," I said, finishing my statement. The night fury was now very interested in me, and was sniffing me all over. I laughed, becoming much more relaxed around this creature than I should have. I pulled out another piece of jerky and fed it to the dragon, and he swallowed it like he had the other one. Forge, who was resting on my shoulder, was positively fuming. I laughed again and fed him a piece of jerky too. I needed to ask Gobber for more, or maybe just bring some real fish next time.

Suddenly the night fury pressed forward, sniffing at me, and I kept walking backward until I hit a large boulder, where I sat down. It started to make a weird gagging sound, and then it spit a piece of jerky onto my lap.

I nearly gagged. The thing had smelled disgusting when it hadn't been in a dragon's stomach, but it smelled even worse when it had, and the thing was covered in saliva. I just stared at the piece, and then back to the dragon. Was this its way of repaying me for feeding it? Did I have any idea what it was doing? Nope, not a chance.

The dragon gave me a funny look, glancing from me to the jerky and

back again. I followed its gaze and saw what it meant and grimaced. He wanted me to eat it. Great. Nothing like eating disgusting food with a vicious dragon at your feet. Did I mention that I have a weird life?

I took a small bite, trying to swallow but gagging. The dragon made a swallowing motion, and I grimaced again. I tried swallowing again, forcing it down. I shuddered. It was gross, and I was never doing that again. I smiled at the dragon, trying to look like I was alright. It looked at me funny again, and then pulled its lips back into an imitation of my smile. I had seen Forge do this before, but seeing it on this huge dragon was just hilarious. I reached my hand out to pet the dragon, hoping that it trusted me, but its smile dropped, and it snarled and ran away.

I was disappointed. I wanted to befriend the onyx dragon. It was a powerful and majestic creature, nothing like what the stories had said of it. It was a beautiful animal, almost regal in appearance. I looked at my shoulder, where Forge was perched, and I saw the look that he was giving me.

"What, I want to befriend him too, you know. You can't be my only friend," I said, scratching him on the head the way that he always liked. He purred with delight, doing that weird clicking, chirping, warbling thing again. I had to figure out that language, but it was something for another day.

I decided to leave the black dragon alone for the day, and moved on to my experiments. There were three things that I had brought to test, and each of them had quite...explosive potential. The first was an attempt at a steam engine that could work the bellows at the forge, but for some reason, every time I tested the damn thing, it blew up in my face. I figured that I needed some sort of release valve, and I had brought the metal to work on it, but I realized that I would need a forge to work on it, but that's where the Terror Forge came in.

See, I named him that for a reason. His fire is fairly hot, even though he does have a shot limit of only about eight, but he was useful for working when I didn't have access to Gobber's forge. It didn't work as well as the massive fire place that the forge had, but it was good enough.

"Alright Forge, I need a little flame here," I said, gesturing to where I needed the heat. Forge complied, heating up the metal til it was white hot. I hammered it out, shaping it until it was the perfect shape that I needed, and then fitted it onto the engine, hoping and praying that the device would work. I tried lighting the furnace of the engine, but once again, I couldn't get it to light.

"Forge, a little help here?" I said, and Forge complied again, lighting the furnace. I had already filled the thing with water, and I stood off on the other side of the cove, hiding behind a rock, praying to every god I knew that my idea would work. I saw the piston starting to move back and forth, which moved the bellow up and down. It started off slowly at first, but it gained speed rapidly, up until the point where the engine nearly rattled itself apart.

Taking the risk, I ran up to the machine, yanking open the valve that I had installed, and all of the excess steam flew out of the boiler,

hitting me square in the face. I coughed, clutching my burning face. It stung a lot, but I was used to it through many unfortunate accidents. The engine's movements slowed, but kept going at actually just the right speed that I wanted. I realized that the valve was what made it work, and just left it open. Well, one down, and now only three to go.

The next device was the beginnings of an attempt at a sort of counterbalance lift mechanism that would be used to climb the many levels of Berk. I climber up to the top of the cove and tied off the cord to a firm tree, and then climber down. There were a few smaller logs that I could use there for the platform, and I lashed them together. I fitted the harness and loaded up the counterbalance with rocks that I had specifically picked. I stood on the platform, fitting my goggles and helmet on for this one. I had fallen too many times on this machine, and I was not about to go to the healer's hut again.

I yanked the release lever, and the platform flew up faster than it should have, flinging me upward until gravity took hold and I landed on the platform again. Great, that same gear failed again. The gear that was meant to control the rate of climbing had failed, again. It was the weakest link in the whole device, and I needed to make it out of something stronger, but I just didn't have the resources. I yanked the other lever, the descent lever, but nothing happened.

"Come on you infernal contraption!" I yelled, flicking the lever back and forth. The darn thing was stuck again. This contraption was just a piece of work.

Suddenly the lever snapped. "Oh this is not good," I said, knowing what would follow a few seconds later. I saw the rope that it was attached to thrash around, unraveling and untying all the other ropes. I tried to climb off the platform and onto the top of the cove, but it happened all too fast. The ropes unraveled until they hit the one that held the platform up, and I shot down faster than you could say 'gravity'. I knew that my only hope was to try and jump, diving out of the way of the falling equipment and stones that would follow quickly. The platform was almost at the ground when I leaped as far and as hard as I could, landing hard on a a stone. I saw the rest of the makeshift lift collapse into heap on the ground before seeing black and going under.

I woke up to a reptilian tongue sliding across my face. It was huge, covered in saliva, and it soaked my face. I gasped, trying to get a breath from under the huge tongue. I sat up to see the night fury standing over me, looking at me with genuine concern. It occurred to me that it had seen the whole incident. I had one hell of a headache, and I held my head, feeling some scabs there.

"Crap," I said. "Now everyone's going to ask questions. This is just great." The night fury's response to that was another lick to my head. "And thank you, for that. That really helps," I said sarcastically. I looked over and saw Forge sitting next to the night fury. "And what are you looking at?" I asked it, and in reply I got more warbling and clicking.

I tried to reach out to the night fury again, but it slunk away like before. I got closer than I had before, though. It ran away, trying to fly away, but crashing into the wall. It tried several times to

escape its rock prison, but each time it failed.

"Why don't you just...fly away?" I asked. Then I saw it. Its tail, which would usually have two fins, was lacking its left one. It must have been the thing that controls its flight, and without it, he couldn't fly right. Well, I would just have to do something about that, but first I would need to gain the dragons trust. I grabbed out my knife, the special one from the arena. I hadn't had need for it there, but it could do a few neat things, well one in particular. I flicked the catch on the knife and it expanded into three foot short sword, perfectly balanced and made to perfection. I closed it and went to the pond.

Unfortunately, I had run out of jerky, so I had to catch a fish or two to give to the night fury, who I had determined was male. He needed a name, and seeing as the first impression I'd had of him had been that toothless face, I decided to name him just that, Toothless.

Catching a fish was harder than I thought, but I ended up catching one in the head with my knife. I hopped out of the pond, trying to dry myself off, but I was fairly soaked. I held the fish out to Toothless, who accepted it without a second thought before running away again. Drat. That was my chance, and I wasted it. I followed him to where he was sitting. He had burned himself a bed of ash and was sitting in the warm coals. I sat next to him, but all I got was a huffy look. He shifted around so his tail was blocking my view of his face.

"Privacy. Okay I get it," I said. I had a good look at his injured tail fin, and I reached out to touch it, but he lifted his tail up just as I was about to touch it. I got up quickly, trying to make it look like I was already walking away. Toothless huffed again, running off to hang upside down in a tree, I had never seen that kind of behavior in a dragon before. He looked just like a bat.

I was getting a little fed up with trying to befriend Toothless, so I just grabbed a stick and started to draw him in the dirt. Better than doing nothing, and I didn't want to risk it with my inventions again. I already had enough wounds that would need explaining, thank you very much.

As I was drawing, I heard Toothless walk up right behind me. I tried to act like I hadn't heard, but when a huge black dragon is right behind you, it gets hard to ignore. I heard a croon of delight, and then a stomping sound followed by the sound of a tree being ripped out of the ground. I looked up and saw that Toothless had grabbed a small tree and was dragging it around in the dirt, attempting to imitate my drawing. He whacked me in the head with the tree, which hurt, but strangely not as much as it should have.

When he was done, he looked down on his drawing with satisfaction. I looked around, amazed that the dragon was creative enough to actually draw. Hell, that it had enough thought power to even imitate something. I went to walk out of my center 'island' in the center of his drawing, accidentally stepping on one of the lines. Toothless growled, and I pulled my foot off, and he crooned. I tried it again, and got the same result. I got the message, don't step on the artwork. I stepped carefully, making sure to not step on the lines. When I got out, my back was to Toothless, who was standing right

behind me.

I heard a huff of an exhale, and I turned around to see the onyx dragon staring me in the face. I reached out my hand to touch it again, and he shied away a little, but he was much more accepting. I turned my head away, extending my hand again. I didn't want to see this fail again. I was more than surprised when I felt the scaly tip of Toothless's snout on my hand. I looked up and saw a look of acceptance on the dragon's face, before it ran off to find another place to sleep.

Again, I found Forge looking at me. "What do you keep looking at me like that for?" I asked, and I got the same warbling and clicking. I wanted so badly to know what he was saying, but I couldn't figure it out. Forge flew up and mounted on my shoulder, pointing to the sky. I looked where he was pointing and I realized what he was saying. It was getting dark, and I needed to go home.

"Alright Forge, I'm going home. Just let me grab my stuff out of here, and I'll be on my way."

I gathered up my inventions, leaving the pieces of the lift. I couldn't hope to pull those out of the wreckage, so I just left them there. Forge kept at my shoulder all the way home, even into the village, although I tried to prevent it. Luckily it was late enough and dark enough that no one noticed, but it was a close one. My dad had already gone off on his nest hunt, so Forge decided to sleep with me for the night.

I set up a small little stone plate on my desk where Forge laid down happily, burning himself a warm little bed. I smiled at the little green dragon.

"You know, if my father could see this, he would probably think he lost his mind. I need to tell the others about this, but in a way that it wouldn't endanger you. I'll think about it in the morning," I said, yawning. It had been a long day, and I needed some sleep.

I grabbed some ice for my head, but oddly there was no injury there. No scabbing, not even a scratch. I had no idea how it had healed, until I remembered that Toothless had licked me.

"Dragon saliva must have healing powers," I said, looking to Forge, who nodded in agreement. I just lay down on my bed, falling asleep instantly. It was just too much to take in at once. If this was a dream, I never wanted to wake up.

#### 4. Getting Acquainted

##### Chapter 4: Getting Acquainted

I woke up the next morning feeling refreshed and ready to take on the day. I got of bed, stretched, and pulled on a fresh shirt and vest. I was about to say good morning to Forge, but I didn't see the emerald dragon anywhere. I looked everywhere, but he was nowhere to be found.

"Huh, well, he must have gone off to the cove with Toothless. Well, I'll see him later," I said.

It was then that I heard the faint flapping of wings right behind me. I spun around quickly, catching a glimpse of the Terror as he ducked around behind my head.

"Forge! What are you doing trying to hide from me?" I asked, spinning around again and catching the dragon in a headlock. He gave me a look of resignation like he had accepted his fate of being my prisoner. It was the look that Toothless had given me that day that I had set him free, that look of giving up all hope and just giving in to the larger, more fearsome presence that lay before him.

I promptly dropped Forge, who managed to catch himself before hitting the ground. I took a shaky breath, steadying myself. This was just getting crazy, even for me. That look struck a cord of grief and regret right through me, as if the dragon were looking into my soul, my deepest self, and pulling something to the surface that had lain dormant for years. It was spooky.

I had a bunch of time before training started, so I decided to take a little breakfast to Toothless. I didn't know what in particular he liked, so I grabbed a little bit of everything, even a whole smoked eel. Ugh, the thing smelled disgusting, and tasted even worse, but maybe Toothless would like it.

I ran to the cove, wanting to spend as much time as I could with Toothless and Forge, my only friends. See, try as I might, none of the other kids ever really accepted me. I was always the outcast, the reject, just that kid who like to make stuff. I was the inventor, and nothing but. Of course, there was Astrid, but that was a long time ago. They used to play together as children, but as they grew older, the two had drifted apart. I still held feelings for her, intense feelings actually, but I had no idea if she felt the same way. Probably not.

I arrived at the cove and was greeted by a groggy night fury. Not the prettiest sight, I might add, as he was still shaking off his sleep and was stumbling all over the place.

"I guess you're nocturnal, huh? Thanks for waking up for me though. You guys are my only friends, so it's nice to see that you care," I said, and I got another groggy look from Toothless, which cleared quite quickly upon seeing the fish. I emptied the small basket, and Toothless started to dig in, but he stopped quickly, running away and hissing at the pile. I followed his gaze and saw what he was hissing at. It was the eel, that disgusting eel.

I held it up, and Toothless's eyes shrunk to slits, looking like he was going to die of fright.

"No! Okay, yeah I don't really like eel much either," I said, throwing the eel off into the distance. Toothless quickly calmed down, resuming eating the rest of the fish.

I was left to think, and I came across a thought. If Toothless was that scared of the eel, would other dragons feel just the same way? There was one sure-fire way to test my theory, and it started in ten minutes.

"Alright guys, be good. I'll be back later, with more food for you



Toothless," I said, grabbing the eel from the ground and hiding it under my vest, where no one could see it. But the dragons could surely smell it, as was evidenced when Toothless freaked out when I walked too close, as well as Forge. I smiled. My plan just might work.

I had to run to make it to training on time, but I managed to run in the door just as Gobber was gathering everyone for the introduction to the lesson.

Alright class, now we're going to do battle with the Hideous Zippleback today. This one should be fun for you kids. You'll each have a bucket filled with water, and your job is to figure out which head is the sparking head, and get it wet. A wet dragon head can't light it's fire. Good luck," said Gobber, trudging over to the cage and yanking the lever.

A thick fog billowed out of the cage, a defense mechanism that the Zippleback could use when frightened, or so Fishlegs was muttering in my ear, along with a host of other unpleasant things about the dragon. Seriously, the kid was like a walking encyclopedia of dragons.

I couldn't see anything, only the fog. I could hear plenty, including the fight that started between Astrid, Ruffnut, Tuffnut, and Snotlout. Apparently Tuffnut and Snotlout had doused Ruffnut and Astrid, thinking that they were dragons.

"Hey, it's us, idiots!" I heard Ruffnut yell out.

"Your butts are getting bigger. We thought you were a dragon," said Tuffnut.

"Not that there's anything wrong, with a dragonesque figure..." said Snotlout before getting punched rather rapidly in the sternum. Ruffnut swung her bucket at her brother, knocking him back into the fog. I heard a scream, and then saw Tuffnut stumble out of the fog clutching his arm.

"Oh, I am hurt! I am very much hurt!" he yelled.

"Chances of survival are dwindling to single digits now," said a worried Fishlegs. He screamed when a head came out of the fog, sniffing him. Fishlegs dumped his bucket on the head, only to see it burble green gas out of its mouth, making a sound akin to laughing, as if it were mocking him.

"Wrong head," muttered Fishlegs, before running away again screaming when a huge stream of gas spurted from the dragon's head and onto Fishlegs.

I saw the other head, and I knew that it was the sparking one. I through my bucketful of water as high as I could, but it only made it halfway before falling down again.

"Oh, come on," I said, furious at my lack of skill in water tossing, something everyone else was better at, being on the fire brigade and all.

The two heads began sniffing at me, growing more and more animated.

The sparking head tried lighting the gas, but it had already dissipated. I approached the dragon, arms outstretched. The Zippleback stumbled backward, nearly tripping over itself in an effort to get away from me.

"Yes, yes, back into your cage. Don't make me tell you again," I said, backing it into its cage. "Now think about what you've done," I said, pulling the eel out from under my vest and tossing it into the cage. I closed the doors, wiping the slime from the eel off of my hands. Ugh, I hated that stuff.

I turned around to see everyone just standing there, staring at me.

"So, are we done? Because I have some things that need attending to and... yeah so, see you tomorrow," I said before strolling out the exit, leaving everyone else just staring and wondering what had happened.

As soon as I was out of sight, I laughed uncontrollably. The looks on all of their faces was just priceless. It was easy to imagine. I mean, me, Hiccup, the village screw up who was only good in the forge, had just bested a dragon, a vicious, man eating beast. But I knew better. I knew what they really were underneath the facade, I knew that they were really our friends, to be trusted and helped. They were powerful beasts, but they had emotions, thoughts, actions all their own.

As soon as I got control of myself, I grabbed a bag of fish and ran off to the cove. I walked in through the passageway that I had made previously, but I didn't see either the emerald or the onyx dragon. I set down the huge basket of fish, walking around and calling for them. I didn't see the black blur until it was on top of me, licking my face with its rough tongue.

"Hey Toothless, I missed you too, but please, stop licking me! Ugh, your tongue is like sandpaper. Okay, okay, what do you want to show me?" I asked after I wiped the saliva off of my face. Toothless led me over to where Forge was sitting in the dust, drawing a strange image with his claw. I watched for a little while, and Forge just sat there, drawing druce little shapes in the dirt. Some of them actually looked like real objects. I saw a Terror, a night fury, a human, I guessed me, a crude image of the cove, and a fish. I patted the dragon's head.

"Well look at you, the little artist. I never knew that you could draw," I said.

Forge clicked and warbled at me again, before remembering that I didn't speak dragonese and switching to charades. He pointed to me with his tail, then made a drawing motion, then he made it look like he were watching the drawing, and then he drew himself. I had a vague idea of what he was trying to say.

"Oh, you saw me drawing and copied me. That makes sense, but you draw well," I said, feeding him a fish, which he ate up gratefully. In fact, looking at Forge's images, I noticed that they all looked suspiciously like some that I had drawn myself. I shook myself out of my trance and saw that Toothless was also trying to draw in the dust. He wasn't as good at it, but he wasn't drawing just to draw. He was

trying to tell me something. He drew an image of a night fury from above, but with a missing left tail fin. He pointed to it with his head, and then motioned over to the work table that I had set up in the cove.

"You want me to try to help you fly again by using my inventions?" I asked, amazed that I was having a conversation with a dragon. Toothless nodded, and then gazed into the sky, looking like he really wanted to return there.

I walked over to my work table, cleared off some of the clutter that had already begun to accumulate, and pulled out a spare piece of paper. I beckoned Toothless over and started to take a few measurements, taking notes on how the tail worked and how it was laid out before drawing a blueprint design. Toothless looked at the design with an eye of approval, and I knew that I had to get my friend airborne again. It was the least I could do for one of my only friends that I had, and I needed to right the wrong I had done by taking away the gift of flight from him.

**\*\*Hey readers, I'm sorry for the delay, but my computer broke and I'm getting it fixed. In the meantime, I have to use my family's computer, which I can only use for certain periods of time. That and I've been working on some big school projects. I'll try to update as fast again now that I have some time this weekend. Please remember to review. \*\***

## 5. Learning to Fly Again

### Chapter 5: Learning to Fly Again

I gazed at the completed blueprint and began to fully take in what the project would entail. The design was meticulous and intricate, with no end to pieces to forge and create, but I wasn't fazed. I was a good blacksmith, I just lacked the strength to do the heavy hammering, but luckily the fin didn't need any of that. In fact, it required a lot more intricate forging, something that I excelled at. Unfortunately, that meant that I needed the actual forge, so I would have to make it incognito.

I walked back to the village after saying goodbye to the dragons. I tried to sneak in without being noticed, but unfortunately, the other teens spotted me and rushed over to me. I groaned. This could mean nothing but trouble.

"Hey useless!" I heard Snotlout yell at me from across the square. I simply rolled my eyes and kept walking, the blueprint tucked under my jacket.

"Well, well, well, if it isn't the inventor. What are you working on this time?" asked Fishlegs. He was the only one of the group who was in the slightest way nice to me, but he was still mean to me.

"Just a project of mine. I'm afraid that I can't tell you what I'm up to. It's top secret," I said, still trying to walk on past them.

"Well we want to know what you're doing, especially after what you did to the Zippleback," said Astrid with a slightly accusing

glare.

"I don't know what you mean. The dragon just backed away from me when I showed no fear. It's not exactly sage wisdom," I said, trying to hide my real methods.

"Yeah, but others have done that, and no dragon has shied away like that. I want to know how you did it," she said again, but I caught her eyes flickering to something behind me.

I turned around to see Snotlout snatch the blueprint out from underneath my vest. If he saw what was on it, my whole game was up. My friends would be killed, and I could do nothing about it.

"I've got it! Let's see what your cooking up shall we," said Snotlout triumphantly. He opened the blueprint and stared at the plans. The other teens came around to look at what was on it.

"What the..." said Snotlout before I stomped on his foot and rapidly punched him in the face. While he was stunned, I grabbed the plans and stowed them under my vest once again. It was a move that Toothless had inadvertently taught me. He had accidentally stepped on my foot, causing me to trip before his head slammed into my face. I just adapted it to human motions and it worked quite well.

"Keep your hands off of my stuff, Snotlout," I said before stomping off to the forge. The other teens just stood there and stared. I had actually punched someone? And efficiently? It was unheard of from me, the village weakling. I smiled again. Toothless and Forge were teaching me a lot, and now I had a place to use it.

I entered the forge, and luckily Gobber wasn't working in it. He had other duties besides being the blacksmith, like teaching and keeping track of his students, the teens. Surely that's where he was. I wasn't complaining.

I set to work quickly, forging the pieces that I would need to make the fin. I had to steal some metal from a few unused swords and shield. I had to get the weight and balance just right, or else the fin would outbalance the tail. I got the forge lit, and when it was warm enough, I heated up the metal, hammering it into its proper shape before dousing it to give it extra strength. I cut out the leather fin cover to the proper shape, sewing it together to the correct dimension.

When I was done, I assembled the pieces together, slipping the fin cover over it. The design allowed the fin to close and open just like Toothless's other fin, and when I was satisfied that it worked properly, I closed it up, storing it away in my personal work room before turning in for the night.

I was exhausted. The work of forging the entire fin in one sitting and doing it without Gobber knowing was extremely taxing. I fell into bed and fell asleep almost instantly, but not before seeing Forge fly into my room and rest on his little rock slab, curling up to go to sleep.

I woke up the next morning and got ready for training. I went for a nice little jog around the village, a little ritual that I had started to just warm me up for training and to gain more skill in the

one physical area that I succeeded, running. After my jog I ran to the training arena, where I saw the rest of the teens already assembled.

"Useless, late as usual," said Snotlout sneering.

"I wouldn't be so cocky Snotlout, or have you forgotten what I did to you yesterday?" I asked, raising a clenched fist. I would have never been able to do anything to him, but luckily he just winced and rubbed his sore face.

"I will get you back for that," he said.

"Alright class, settle down. Today we're going to be fighting the Terrible Terror. Don't be mistaken that it is easy to take on because of its small size. These things can be ferocious, especially in packs. Now none of you are skilled enough to take on a whole pack, but you can test your skills against one for now. Ready? Let's go," said Gobber. He opened the cage, and a ruby red Terror popped out.

"Hah, it's like the size of my..." started Tuffnut before he was knocked over by the Terror, who eagerly chewed on his rather round and red nose.

"Oh get off of him Terror. Come here, I've got something for you," I said quietly, pulling out a small piece of fish jerky. The Terror eagerly got off of Tuffnut and gobbled up the jerky. Seeing me as a friend, he started to lick my hand before climbing up and onto my shoulder. I smiled, petting it a little before I heard a voice just behind me.

"Hiccup, don't move," said Astrid, before swinging her ax sideways, intent on lopping the Terror's head off.

"No!" I yelled, throwing out my arm and catching the ax by the pole, somehow stopping it before it hit the Terror.

"What are you doing?" she asked, trying to pry the weapon free of my grasp.

"Go little buddy. I'll hold her here," I said to the Terror, who listened promptly and ran into the cage, and Gobber shut the door.

I let go of the ax, the strain of holding it just too much for my measly arms. Astrid was furious.

"Why did you stop me? I was going to kill that thing? And what were you doing to it, talking to it? And why did it not hurt you when it climbed on your shoulder?" she asked rapid fire.

"First off, you were swinging an ax at my head. Second off, the rest of your questions are for me to know and for you to find out," I said before running off to the cove. Astrid tried to follow me, but I knew the woods really well, and I lost her easily.

"Hey Toothless! Buddy! I've got something here for you," I said, walking into the cove tentatively. I didn't see him anywhere, but I knew that he was somewhere close. I heard a slight rustle behind me, and I turned to see a black blur racing toward me. I reacted

instinctively, diving out of the way. I had no idea that I had ever had the reflexes to do such a thing, and I knew that Toothless was equally surprised.

"You know Toothless, I think your little surprise attacks have heightened my reflexes. Alright, let's get this thing on you," I said, gesturing to the fake fin.

He complied, and I strapped the device onto his tail. I opened it, checking it for size.

"It's not bad, it works I guess..." I started before Toothless tried to take off. I knew that there was no way that the tail would stay open at such high speeds, so I yanked it open. Immediately, Toothless began to fly up again.

"Ha! It works!" I yelled, tilting it, and Toothless followed. We skimmed over the pond, but when Toothless tried to do a turn, I fell off, and with nothing to prop open the tail, he quickly fell to earth again.

"Yeah!" I yelled from the pond. I got out and wrung myself out. I was soaked to the bone, but my adrenaline was pumping.

"Alright bud, I need to find a way to keep that fin open," I said. I got out a piece of rope and tried attaching it to the fin and to my hand. After a trial run, I only succeeded in getting wet again. I tried attaching it to my foot, and I got some success, but it still didn't work. I needed a device to make this work, and I knew just who to talk to.

I walked down to the docks where I saw Plank working on a ship.

"Hey Plank. I was wondering if you could answer something for me. This is just a thought that I had, and I need to know the answer," I said.

"Shoot," said Plank, the shipwright.

"Okay, say you had two sail on a ship, at opposite ends, and you wanted to control them both from one central point. How would you do it?"

Plank frowned. "Well, I would probably use a pulley system, much like how they already work, but run a rope to both sails."

"Alright, thanks," I said before running off, leaving behind a very confused Plank. It seemed to be happening to me a lot recently.

I ran to my workshop and started sketching an idea, and now that I knew the concept, the plans came together easily. I quickly gathered and made the materials that I would need, even adding a sort of gear ratio system where I could hold the fin open at certain lengths to dictate which direction it moved.

I decided that I would need a saddle for this rig, so I set about cutting out the leather pieces and sewing them together, and before long, I had a beautiful saddle that would suit me perfectly. I gathered up all of the pieces and put them in a basket before sneaking out to the cove again.

Toothless seemed to think that getting the saddle on him was one big game, and I had to chase him around for the better part of an hour before I could get the apparatus on him. When I did, I climbed on him and we took off.

Having never practiced using the foot pedal before, the first few flights were awkward, and involved a lot of falling off and getting wet. After several flights, I had figured out which foot positions meant which direction, although I did have to check my cheatsheet every once in awhile.

Soon, we were flying pretty competently, my foot starting to move instinctually from pure muscle memory. Toothless was almost bubbling with joy, and we flew high and fast.

We raced upward, flying as high and as fast as we could.

"Oh, this is amazing! Feel the wind in my...cheatsheet! Stop!" I yelled as my cheatsheet came loose. Toothless stopped, his flight stalling. The harness that I had installed to keep me connected to Toothless was at just the wrong angle to come loose, and before you could see 'flight' we were falling.

I spread out my arms to try and slow my descent, but it didn't do much. Toothless just spun helplessly.

"Alright bud...you just need to...angle yourself...ow!" I yelled as his wing clipped my face. I spun around in the air, closing my arms into my body and plummeting toward Toothless. I clipped back into the harness and pulled up just as we were about to crash into the trees. Unfortunately, that put us right at the entrance to a rocky maze.

I threw away the cheatsheet in my hands and relied solely on my muscle memory. We zoomed through the rock spire, my foot controlling his motions. As we flew, we became one, two beings sharing the same space, working in tandem to free ourselves from the rocky spires. It was an exuberating feeling.

When we pulled out of the maze. I threw up my hands triumphantly. Toothless blew a plasma blast that exploded before us.

"Oh come on," I said as we flew right into it, scorching the edge of my hair and my eyebrows.

## 6. Secrets of the Dragons

### Chapter 6: Secrets of the Dragons

I blinked away the burned eyebrows from my face as I sat by my little fire cooking a fish that Toothless had caught. Toothless had caught his own impressive pile of fish and was munching on them happily. He regurgitated one for me and looked at me approvingly.

"Uh, no thanks, I'm good," I said, gesturing to the fish that I was cooking. Toothless just nodded and ate the fish. I sat back against the dragon, and closed my eyes. This was the life. No rules, no responsibilities, just freedom with the one person who ever accepted me.

Of course it never crossed my mind for a second to run away. I could never do that to my dad or Gobber, but I was sure that everyone else wouldn't even notice that I was gone. Just one of the perks of being me.

As I sat there lost in thought, a pack of Terrible Terrors flew over to the overwhelming scent of fish. Toothless protected his pile of fish with his paw. The Terrors tried several tactic to take some fish from the pile, but none worked. They tried just a head on assault, and then they tried to distract Toothless from the front while another Terror sneaked around the back of the pile to grab a fish. It looked quite comical but the Terrors worked well together, like a well oiled machine. Toothless caught the intruder and made a mocking gesture to it. The Terror scraped at the ground before sucking in a deep breath and I knew that it was going to breath fire.

Toothless looked positively lazy as he shot a weak little fireball into the Terror's mouth. His stomach inflated, and then he let it all out with a huff. He stumbled over to me, smoke flowing out of his mouth.

"Huh. not so fireproof on the inside, are you? Here you go," I said, tossing a fish to the smoking Terror, who gobbled it up quickly. He then looked at me with huge eyes and curled up next me. I just pet the Terror, knowing what I had just done.

"You know, everything we know about you guys is wrong. I'm going to change that," I said resolved that I could make it work. But I wanted to have some fun with it, play some games with the other teens before I actually showed them the truth. This was going to be good.

We flew back to the cove, but on the way, I accidentally hit the wrong position on the foot pedal and we fell into a huge field of a soft, sweet smelling grass. Toothless was beside himself with pleasure, rolling around in the stuff and smelling all that he could. I filled my bag with the stuff. I wanted to use it in tomorrow's training. Once I snapped Toothless out of his little dance, we flew back to the cove.

I walked back home, and Forge followed me as always. Both of the dragons and I had become close, but in different ways. Toothless was that trustworthy friend who revealed to me all of the secrets of dragons, and Forge was just that kind of friend that you have that just likes to be with you and help out. I loved it as it was the only two friends I had ever had since I was ten.

Forge hid in my vest until we got to the forge. I had some other projects that I wanted to work on, and I was sure that Forge could help me there. Forge camped out on the desk while I got the plans and designs that I would need. The design that I was working on was a series of lenses that would focus sunlight into a beam powerful enough to start a fire in the case of emergencies. I had already gathered the sand and other minerals that I would need to the glass and the mold, so I heated up the mixture. Soon enough, it was molten, but before I poured it into the molds, Forge came over and spit a fireball into the mixture, making it flame up for a second, but it died down.

"What did you do?" I asked. Forge just gestured to the molds with his



tail. I poured the mixture into the molds and let it cool. It cooled extremely fast, and when I pulled it out of the molds, I was shocked by what I saw. The glass was green, a faint green, but still the same forest green that Forge was. It was incredible.

In an act of extreme clumsiness, I dropped the glass lens, and they all tinkled to the ground but didn't break, surprisingly. I held them up to the light. Not even a scratch. I had never see glass that acted like that. It was perfect for what I needed.

"Thanks Forge," I said, and the emerald dragon just nodded. I set about making the holder for the lenses, a simple wire framework with a metal handle and cover flap for the top of the device so it didn't just burn things spontaneously. When it was done, I took it out to the back to test it out. No one went back there so Forge followed me. I opened the lens cover with the trigger on the handle, and I saw a satisfying light shine on the forest floor. Smoke started to rise off of the ground and soon burst into a small flame. Satisfied, I put the shutter back on and stomped out the small flame. Just to test for consistency, I tried it again.

When the light showed up on the ground, I moved the device a little, just to see what would happen. Forge's head shot up, and he tried to pounce on the moving light. I laughed and kept moving it around, removing a few of the lenses so that the forest floor wouldn't burst into flames. I led the Terror on a merry little dance with the light on the ground, and the Terror for the life of him couldn't figure out why he couldn't get the light. It was really amusing, and now I had a new trick in my arsenal to try out in training. I was ready for whatever Gobber might throw at us.

The next day saw training early in the morning, after my jog of course. When I arrived in the training ring, I saw that Gobber had set up a maze of wooden boards. and stone pillars. I was confused for a second, but I remembered what Gobber had always had me set these up for, fighting the Deadly Nadder. Since they were light on their feet, a Nadder could jump on the stone pillars and race through the maze while we in the maze had to be faster, lighter, smarter. It was a daunting task, but I knew several good tricks, and I had a fun idea that I wanted to do, just for fun.

Gobber released the dragon and then raced up to the observation area where he oversaw the whole event. He called out random bits of information, tips and jokes alike. I didn't hear most of them as I was busy racing through the maze.

The Nadder had quickly hopped to the top of the maze, dashing between the tops of the isles with ease and grace, trying to find the humans buried in the maze of wood and stone.

Just because I could, and partly to see \_if\_ I could, I climbed up one of the wood palisades and found myself on top of the maze. I had ditched my shield, but I still had my knife, which I had never really tested its use before, but I had it if I needed it. Just to see if it still worked, I flipped the latch on the side of the handle and saw it expand into its short sword form. This was Switchblade, one of my more genius creations. Satisfied, I sheathed it into knife form before putting it back in my belt.

I ran across the wooden walls, racing toward the Nadder perched atop

a stone pillar. I heard Gobber yelling at me from his place in the observation area.

"What are you doing up there Hiccup? Get down!"

"Just strategy Gobber! There's a method to my madness!" I yelled as I raced after the Nadder again. Years in the forge had given me great hand-eye coordination, and working with Toothless had increased my foot-eye coordination, so balancing on the walls was easy.

Before too long I was face to face with the Nadder. It eyed me strangely, seeing a human in the space that was reserved for dragons.

"Hey, it's okay. I don't want to hurt you," I said, extending a hand in friendship. Just to solidify things, that hand also held a small blade of dragon nip, the grass that Toothless had loved so much. It was small enough that it wouldn't be overwhelming, but just enough to gain its trust.

The Nadder loved it, and before long, I had made a friend. The Nadder nuzzled up to me as we balanced on the walls.

"Alright girl, I know you like me. Would you mind if I ride you?" I asked tentatively. The Nadder nodded and leaned down to let me climb on.

"Hiccup, what in Hel's name are you doing?" screamed Gobber.

"Something I was born to do! Let's go!" I yelled to the Nadder, and we took off after the other teens. I didn't want to hurt any of them, but if I could incapacitate them, I was fine with that.

The Nadder leaped down into the maze, and Snotlout was the first teen we saw.

"What the..." was all he had time to say before a barrage of spikes pinned him by his clothes to the wall. He just stood there dumbfounded as we raced on after the teens. This was more fun than I'd had in ages.

Astrid was the next one. She actually threw her ax at the Nadder, but she deflected the ax and simply charged Astrid. Astrid held her ground, putting up her shield, the perfect target for a fire blast.

"Fire blast!" I yelled to the Nadder, who complied, sending a burst of super hot fire that blasted Astrid backward into the wall. She just sat there dazed like Snotlout, not quite sure how to react.

The others were dispatched rather quickly, and I got off of the Nadder and led her back to the cage.

"Don't worry girl. I'll come back for you. I won't let you get hurt again," I said. The Nadder crooned at me in thanks before nuzzling me and walking back to the cage.

I turned around to find Gobber staring me in the face, a look of anger on his face.

"What was that? Were you riding that dragon? What kind of trick is that? Who taught you this? Well, answer me!" He yelled pretty much all at once.

"Gobber, calm down and get a breath. I learned these tricks from a few friends of mine. Perhaps I'll have you meet them someday, but for now, let's just say that I know quite a bit more about dragons than you do," I said before walking out the door.

"Not so fast young man. You're not going anywhere until I meet these friends of yours. Are they giving you a death wish? Dragons are vicious beasts, incapable of doing anything other than killing," said Gobber grabbing me and pulling me back.

"Ah, and that's where you're wrong. Dragons are wondrous creatures, and they don't want to hurt anyone, once you get to know them. In fact, why don't I introduce you to one of my friends now. Hey Forge! Come here! I have some people that I want you to meet!" I yelled out, and Forge flew in quickly, mounting himself on my shoulder.

"How have you been, Forge? Watching my training? How do you think it went?" I asked him, and he simply smiled that dragon smile that he always did.

Astrid got up out of her daze and raced toward me, ax raised, ready to chop Forge's head off. I ducked out of the way easily, drawing Switchblade and extending it to full length. I had made it perfectly balanced to me, so it felt like there was nothing there, just an extension of my arm.

I fought off Astrid, who kept trying to kill Forge. I had no idea where I was drawing the skills to sword fight, but I blamed Toothless and his constant sneak attacks. That and flying had heightened my reflexes and helped me overcome my normal clumsy nature. Soon, I disarmed Astrid and stuck the sword at her throat.

"No one touches my friends," I said menacingly. I sheathed Switchblade and walked out of the ring, Forge still perched on my shoulder. "I'll tell you guys more tomorrow, if you're feeling more cooperative." Gobber tried to catch me, but it was too late. I had already buried myself in the maze of the woods. What with Gobber's peg leg, I could easily outpace him.

I made my way to the cove, where I hopped on Toothless and flew off. I was amazed how quickly I had already gotten used to flying, like I was born to do it. The fake fin was easy enough to control after those first few flights, but finding the right positions took practice, but I had gotten it pretty fast.

I had always been a fast learner. In fact, it was something that Gobber had noticed very early. When I was starting out as his apprentice, I learned all the skills I would need in only a year's time, even creating my own methods and inventions. Lessons that should have taken weeks I did in days, and soon, Gobber ran out of things to teach me. That's when I got to inventing, and the trait had stuck with me forever. It certainly helped, especially when dealing with the new field of dragons. They were an ever changing enigma.

After a good flight, we set down in the cove again, and Toothless started clicking and warbling again.

I was resolved to learn that language, and with no time like the present, I sat down with Toothless and Forge, pulling out my notebook .

"Alright fellas, it's time for me to learn dragonese."

## 7. How to Speak Dragonese

### Chapter 7: How to Speak Dragonese

I decided to start out by deciphering two critical words, yes and no.

"Okay guys, what would the word 'yes' be?" I asked, and Toothless replied with the appropriate sound. I marked it down in my notebook and tried to mimic the sound. It was crude but I thought I got it right.

"Was that right?"

\_Yes,\_ said Forge.

"Okay, now what is 'no'?"

Forge replied with the sound that matched the word and I tried it out like last time, getting it right again.

"What's my name?"

Toothless replied with the sound that I heard often from both dragons, a kind of croon mixed with a purr.

"So that's what that means! I was always wondering why you did that around me," I said after mimicking the sound.

I repeated this pattern, asking for words or sentences before trying to mimic them. I had abandoned all attempts to record the sounds in my notebook, just focusing on memorization. The process was tedious, but I learned several things about the language.

There were no articles or subject pronouns, so I had to fill them in from context. Also, there were about five sounds that made up the whole language, the warble, the click, the growl, the purr, and the croon. All of the words were made of combination or inflection of these sounds. It was hard for my human mouth to make the sounds, but I managed with a crude version of the language. The dragons seemed to like being talked to in dragonese rather than Norse, and once I was able to deduce enough dragonese I started asking the questions in the language, only using Norse for unfamiliar words, which the dragons filled in for me.

I continued this process for three days, as we had an extended break from training as Gobber tried to track me down to get answers for the Nadder incident, but I just stayed in the cove except to sleep, and even then I slept a few nights in the cove wrapped up in Toothless's wings. It was surprisingly warm, for a reptile, and I loved it. It

felt like home when nothing else did.

By the end of the third day, I was fairly fluent in the language. There were still plenty of words that I didn't know, but as I talked with the dragons, my vocabulary grew. I was soon able to have an actual conversation with them.

\_Greetings Toothless, and may the wind always find your wings\_, I said, giving the proper dragon greeting .

\_And greetings to you Hiccup, and may the sky always hear your song\_, said Toothless, giving the proper response.

\_It's still weird talking to a dragon, you know. In my culture, you guys are seen as vicious and evil beasts, known only for killing. I'm going to change that, but I'll need your help\_, I said.

\_You know that you will always have my help Hiccup, especially after you fixed my tail\_, he said, gesturing to the fake fin that I had made.

\_Toothless, I know that this is probably a bad time, but you do know that I was the one who shot you down, right?\_ I said tentatively, not sure how he would respond to this information.

\_Of course I do. Why else would you have come looking for me? No viking just wanders the woods without a purpose. I forgive you for what you did, and you righted the wrong. That's all that matters. As we dragons always say,\_ said Toothless who finished with a sound I was unfamiliar with.

\_Uh, what did that mean?\_

\_It is a word that does not quite have a translation in your limited human language, but to put it in simple terms the word means 'always forgive, never forget.' It is a motto that we dragons have held for generations, and we treasure it greatly. I'm sure you can find an application of the concept to your own situation,\_ said Toothless.

I had explained to him my predicament, and I had described the mistreatment that I had experienced, to which Toothless got very upset, but as he said 'always forgive, never forget.' I needed to forgive the other teens for mistreating me and my father for ignoring me, but I could never forget it or it would happen all over again. I was determined to not have that happen again.

\_So, are you ready for the plan tomorrow?\_ I asked Toothless, and he smiled back with his gummy dragon smile.

\_They'll be so surprised. I can't wait to see the looks on their faces,\_ said Toothless. I could just picture all the faces of the teens and Gobber as we proved to them that dragons were not to be killed, and we were going to have some fun with it.

\_What will you be up against again?\_ asked Toothless.

\_A pack of Terrors. Gobber thinks we can take the little buggers on. That should make things interesting. Forge, you want to come along for the ride?\_ I asked the emerald Terror.

\_Oh yes, I want to come. I wouldn't miss it for the world. Their faces a few days ago were so good and I can't wait to see them again. I'll go tell the dragons in the cages the plan, so they're ready for tomorrow. This is going to be so much fun,\_ said Forge, pretty much all at once. I swear, once I was able to understand him, he just wouldn't shut up. Toothless told me that he had been like that ever since he had met him, but I had never known because he couldn't understand, and now the dragon just wouldn't stop talking. It was getting annoying, and I was getting a headache. I almost wished that I could unlearn dragonese just for Forge, but now the language was cemented in my head, and I was fairly fluent. I couldn't not understand it now.

I made my way back to the village and Forge followed me as always, but he chose to just head to my room alone because I needed to talk to Gobber about something. I needed more of his fish jerky if I wanted my plan to work, and only Gobber knew the recipe.

I found the man in the forge, hard at work.

"Ah, there you are, you little rascal. I've got more questions for you," said Gobber, wiping the sweat from his brow.

"And I will answer all of them tomorrow, but right now I need a favor. What is your recipe for you famous fish jerky?"

Gobber raised an eyebrow. "Why? What do you want it for?"

"Let's just say I've found someone who's quite partial to the stuff."

"Alright, give me a minute, and I'll show you how to make the stuff. I don't know who could stomach it besides me, but if you want some you'll get some," he said, a little miserably, but I knew that underneath he wanted someone to like his cooking.

He brought out two smoked fish and flayed them on the table, removing the bones and tossing them aside. He cut the fish into strips, salted it crazily, and then stuck it on a stick and roasted it on the forge fire. The whole process took less than ten minutes, and the smell almost made me barf, but I got the jerky that I needed, and I filled my bag with it and ran back to my house.

I discussed the plan with Forge for a while, reviewing our parts and then turning in for the night.

I woke up to several sounds that all collided at once. Crashing and thumping, followed by someone screaming in dragonese and the smell of smoke.

I opened my eyes to see Gobber trying to beat Forge to a pulp, while Forge simply yelled at Gobber with several long words that shall not be mentioned here. Let's just say I wanted to wash that dragons mouth out with soap several times over. Forge had also singed the few sparse hairs on Gobber's face.

"I'll get you, you little rascal!" yelled Gobber.

\_Rascal yourself, meathead! \_

"Shut up both of you!" I yelled, making both stop their bickering. "Gobber calm down. It's just Forge. You know, from training." I then switched to dragonese for Forge. Even though they understood Norse, they understood dragonese so much better. \_Forge, you know better. I need to wash your filthy mouth out with soap,\_ I reprimanded, but Forge knew that it was kind hearted.

"Did you just talk to it?" asked Gobber.

"I'll explain everything at training, just let me throw on my boots. Forge, get the others ready," I told the emerald Terror, who raced off to the training arena.

I threw my boots and vest on, and I walked out the door with Gobber still following behind, dumbfounded. We reached the training ground to find the teens pinning Forge down to the ground and trying to slice his head off.

\_You know Forge, I've had to save your head a lot recently. It's like Astrid's ax is attracted to your neck,\_ I said sarcastically.

\_Yeah, yeah, funny. Get me out of here!\_

I chuckled and pulled out the fire starter lenses, removing the proper amount to leave a burn but nothing major. I pointed the beam at the arms that were holding Forge down. Soon, they let go of the dragon and started rubbing their wrists, which had small burns on them.

"Thank you. Need I remind you what happens when you touch my friends. I hope Forge is alright, or you'll be sorry," I said. Forge just hopped up and jumped on my shoulder.

"Forge? You named it?" asked Astrid incredulously.

"Well yeah. I couldn't call him 'the Terror' forever could I?"

"I don't know, that sounds like a good name," said Tuffnut.

"Shut up and listen. Hiccup promised us explanations, and he's going to give them now," said Gobber.

"So you think, but I'll do it after we face the dragons. Let them loose Gobber," I said with an air of authority. Gobber looked at me weirdly, but he did as I asked, and soon the ring was full of a whole bunch of hungry, chattering Terrors. The amount of words they were all spitting out rapid fire was enough to make me dizzy, but I tried to shut it out.

\_Hey guys, look what I've got,\_ I said, holding up a whole handful of jerky.

\_The human speaks dragonese?\_

\_That's unnatural.\_

\_But he has food.\_

\_I want it.\_

\_Let's eat!\_

That last one made all the other Terrors ravenous, and they all raced to my hand and ate the jerky in a heartbeat.

\_Hey guys, could I ask a favor? Could you open up all the other dragon cages. I'm sure Forge already told you about the plan. Now is the time to change tradition,\_ I said. The Terrors complied, and soon all of the other dragons were out in the arena. There was a Monstrous Nightmare, a Hideous Zippleback, a Nadder, a Gronkle, and of course, the Terrors.

I stood in the sea of these dragons while the other teens and Gobber just pressed themselves against the wall, trying to make themselves invisible. I quickly gained the trust of the other dragons, and we were pretty chummy pretty quick.

"Just one thing missing here. Toothless!" I yelled. The onyx dragon raced through the door and into the arena.

"Is that..." asked Gobber.

"A night fury, yup. That's Toothless the night fury, my other friend. Of course, all of these dragons are my friends now," I said, gesturing to the multitude of dragons around me.

"So, as you may have seen by now, dragons can be friendly to us, as long as they're not provoked. They can be valuable allies to us, friends and companions. We have nothing to fear.

"Yeah right! Tell that to the dragons that have killed hundreds of us!" yelled a Snotlout.

"And we've killed thousands of them! They only attack when provoked, and I think we've provoked them a lot, if I do say so myself."

Snotlout, after figuring he had heard too much I guess, attempted to throw a nearby knife at me. I wasn't looking, but when I saw the flash of silver out of the corner of my eye, I reacted, plucking the spinning knife out of the air and sending it spinning back at him, narrowly missing his neck.

"It'll be your neck next time if you don't just shut up and listen," I said, glaring at Snotlout. Everyone just stared. How could I, Hiccup, ever have done a feat like that? I had never been good with weapons and I was extremely clumsy. Even the greatest warrior couldn't pluck a knife out of the air and send it back in one motion. It was unheard of.

\_I don't know, I kind of like his feisty attitude,\_ said the Nightmare.

\_Yeah? I'll probably have all of you guys find a rider among the teens, so it's nice to know that you already have one that you like. I hope you're alright with that,\_ I said.

\_Of course, as long as they comply and show the proper respect. \_

I caught a whole host of weird looks from the crowd as I talked with



the Nightmare. Soon, Gobber mustered up the courage to ask the question that everyone was thinking.

"Did you just...talk to that dragon?"

"Yes, yes I did. Dragons have their own language, which I have dubbed dragonese. I was able to puzzle out the language over the last few days, and I'm fairly fluent now. It's actually quite a simple language once you boil it down, but it took some trial and error to figure it out," I said.

\_They don't believe you, you know that right?\_ said the Gronckle.

\_Yeah I know, but I have to try. These are my people, and we've been fighting for far too long. Unfortunately, viking stubbornness isn't making it any better,\_ I said.

I caught the looks that everyone was giving me. "Sorry, the dragons like being talked to in dragonese better than Norse. I've gotten into the habit of switching into that language whenever a dragon talks to me. I swear though, those Terrors are making so much noise that I can't even think straight. Once you can understand them, you can't get them out of your head," I said, rubbing my temples.

"So...you trained a dragon?" asked Astrid.

"Dragons. Multiple. It's really not hard, you just have to trust each other, and pretty soon you're friends. As Toothless said, 'always forgive, never forget.' It's a good motto to live by. And now it's all of your turns. Who wants to learn how to train a dragon?"

## 8. Training Dragons

### Chapter 8: Training Dragons

The group just stared at me like I had just gone insane. What I was suggesting was something that went against everything that Vikings had been taught for generations. Gobber voiced this opinion to me.

"Are you nuts! Dragons can't be trained! They're ruthless killing machines," he said, which the dragons did not like at all. They started growling at him, but I stopped them.

"Then, Gobber, how do you explain this," I said, gesturing to the plethora of dragons that surrounded me. Just to prove my point even more, I told the Terrors to pick Gobber up, spin him around, and then set him back down, all without so much as scratching him.

They did as I asked, and Gobber looked like he was going to wet himself, screaming as the Terrors enjoyed their moment of fun with the large two-limbed man. When he saw that he was okay when they set him down, he promptly ran to the other end of the arena and squeezed himself into the corner, trying to be as small as possible.

"You see Gobber. I asked them to do it, and they did it. They listen to me, and I listen to them. We all respect each other and we all get along," I said.

"But Hiccup, you can't be serious. I mean, \_training dragons\_. Come on. How on earth would you come up with that one. I know this is just some trick of yours, like hypnosis or something, and the moment we get close enough they're going to tear us to shreds," said Astrid.

\_Hmm. She thinks smart. I like her, plus she's almost as pretty as me. Almost,\_ said the Nadder.

\_Well you guys can be the first if you want. \_So, Astrid, how would you like to go first. The Nadder already likes you," I said.

Astrid looked like she was going to turn tail and run, but then I saw a look of resolve on her face. She didn't want to look weak in front of everyone, so she slowly nodded.

"Alright. Now come over here, slowly. Oh, but first toss your ax over there. They really don't like weapons," I said, and Astrid looked suspicious, but did as I asked. "Okay, now gently place your hand on her snout, and stay out of her blind spot," I said, leading her hand to the dragon's snout. She did it cautiously, making sure not to get her hand bitten off, but when they made contact, and nothing bad happened, I saw a small smile play on her lips.

"Now gently move back to her tail and smooth her tail spikes down," I said.

At this Astrid looked really confused, and another emotion that I had never seen in her before. Fear. She was afraid. And why wouldn't she be. A Nadder's tail is full of poisonous spikes that can launch at will. Just one nick from one of them will paralyze you for several days, not to mention the mind numbing pain. I rubbed my left leg. The spot was still sore from when I had once been hit by a Nadder spike. Worst experience of my life, right next being tossed over a cliff by Snotlout.

After an intense few moments, Astrid slowly moved back to her tail, going very cautiously. She smoothed the tail spikes down, careful to not touch any of them on the tip. When she smoothed them down, she went back up front and kept her hand on its snout, just staring into its massive eyes. I knew that they had already forged a bond, and with time, it would grow into something beautiful.

After seeing the success that Astrid had, the other teens followed suit, each choosing their own dragon. Snotlout chose the Monstrous Nightmare, Fishlegs the Gronkle, and the twins jointly chose the Hideous Zippleback. They all made friends with their dragons, but none really bonded as well as Astrid had, except for maybe Fishlegs. Snotlout was too busy admiring himself and his choice in dragons, and the twins were too busy trying to chose which head to ride on.

I sorted out all of these problems, still conscious of Gobber still sitting in the corner muttering to himself. I walked over to see if he was okay.

"Hey, are you alright Gobber?" I asked, trying not to sound like I was babying the man.

"I'm fine Hiccup, but I don't trust those beasts like you do. They

took me arm and me leg away, and I'd like to keep my remaining limbs intact. Plus, I've been fighting them for so long, you don't really expect me to just make friends with them in one day," he said.

I knew that he was scared, hell, if he wasn't I'd be worried. Gobber was just being himself, but I needed to find dragon for him. He could use the company that it offered. I decided to try something small, a Terror for Gobber, just like Forge for me.

I walked over to the hoard of Terrors, who were busy playing an amusing game of tag with each other.

\_Hey guys. I don't mean to interrupt, but would one of you like to become the friend of that man over there?\_ I asked, gesturing to Gobber. One of the Terrors stepped forward, a dusty brown one that seemed to have already taken a liking to Gobber from earlier.

\_I like him! Can I go be his friend? He looks lonely,\_ said the Terror, a look of sorrow in his eyes.

\_Yes, but go carefully. He's a little scared of dragons,\_ I said.

The Terror walked up to Gobber slowly, sniffing him out, just giving him a good look over. Gobber noticed the little Terror and seemed to reach for his knife, until he noticed that it was missing. Hiccup just held up the little knife in triumph, and Gobber looked, well, gobsmacked. The Terror continued to approach, and Gobber looked like it was going to take its head off, until something wet smacked his face.

He picked it up only to find that it was a piece of jerky that I had thrown at him, and the Terror eyed it hungrily. He dangled it out in front of him as far as he could, trying not to let the beast get too close.

The Terror accepted the food, ate it quickly, and then ran to Gobber and snuggled against his side like an adorable puppy. I saw Gobber's eyes widen in amazement, and soon enough he began petting the little Terror, who loved the attention he was getting.

"You know Hiccup, you may be right. These beasts aren't so bad, but try telling that to the rest of the village," said Gobber.

I mentally smacked myself. That was the one part of this that I had failed to think about. Half the village came to watch their training sessions anyway, and so most of them probably already knew. I didn't quite know what to do, but I decided to keep training the group I had.

"Okay gang, those of you who have dragons big enough for flying," I said, eying Gobber, "Will now mount your dragons and follow me. We're going to do a simple flying exercise, just to get you guys acquainted with your dragons. Plus, flying is awesome, and I'm sure you'll all enjoy it," I said, winking at the others.

I helped the others get tentatively on their dragons. It was easier said than done. The teens were still very much scared of the dragons, as they had experienced the terrific powers of the beasts before on the raids, and convincing them to climb on the things that ended the

lives of some of their family members, mine included, was hard.

The hardest by far was getting Snotlout on the Monstrous Nightmare. The beast was very fond of lighting itself on fire, covering itself and spreading a very sticky form of fire that burns anything it touches, and can only be put out by basically submerging the fire in water for a long period of time. So naturally, getting Snotlout to get on the back of the beast, the part that secreted this fire, was proving to

be very difficult.

\_All right, can you promise me that you will not light my...friend...on fire? He's, kind of paranoid of it,\_ I explained to the dragon, who for the life of him couldn't quite grasp the concept that Snotlout was scared of him. Honestly, he wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed, but than again, neither was Snotlout. They went well together.

\_I won't, so long as he doesn't provoke me,\_ the Nightmare responded.

"Well Snotlout, he won't burn you unless you provoke him. Happy now? Look I'll even get on his back first to prove it to you," I said. I climbed on the dragon's back, and he supported me just fine, not setting my buns on fire at least.

Snotlout's face was still deathly pale, but I could see that he was warming to the idea. There was one thing though, that was still keeping him back.

"How do I know that this isn't just some plot of revenge on me for what I did to you? How do I know that you're not trying to kill me?!" he asked, and he made me wonder whether he was trying to ask me or himself.

I raised my eyebrow. "Really Snotlout? Does that sound like something I would do, or that I would be capable of doing? Seriously, use some logic. I found out the secret to training dragons, and you think I would waste it on some ill-conceived revenge attempt? You really are stupid!" I said, keeping my voice mostly calm and even, but the last time came out more forced.

Snotlout looked genuinely scared of me for a second, before firming his resolve and vaulting onto the Nightmare's back.

"I'll have you know that I'm not as stupid as you think," he said firmly.

"Is that why you haven't noticed the giant slit in your shirt that you got from stupidly trying to vault a dragon from the front?" I asked.

He looked confused, before looking down at his shirt and seeing the giant gash in his shirt that the dragon's horn had created. It ran down the entire front of the shirt, nearly cutting it in half. How he hadn't noticed it before is beyond any of my reasoning, but I guess it just goes to prove how really daft he is.

There was a small snag in my plan, and that was that the others had a

hard time staying on their dragons. They needed saddles, like the one that I had made for Toothless, but adapted to each dragon. It would take a lot of work, but I knew how to do it, and I could teach the others, and they could make their own. But that would take time, so I decided to just focus on bonding with their dragons.

I had them choose names for their dragons. Astrid chose Stormfly, Snotlout chose Hookfang, Fishlegs chose Meatlug (a decision I still question to this day), and Ruffnut and Tuffnut named the two heads Bark and Belch.

The teens were bonding well with their dragons, getting to know their strengths and weaknesses better, hell even Gobber was having fun with his dragon, which he affectionately named Coal. I smiled, seeing the future of the island opening right before my eyes. I was reveling in my joy, but one of the messengers ran up to the arena, shouting, "The ships have returned!"

This was one problem I did not want to deal with.

\*\*I apologize for the super long delay, but I have had a lot of projects over the past weeks as well as having technical issues. I know that I should have told you earlier, but as I said, lots to do, little time to do it. I'll have more time to update so I can do it more frequently now.\*\*

## 9. A New Home

### Chapter 9: A New Life

\*\*Please don't kill me for this. I know I'll probably get loads of flames for this chapter, but hear me out. It's all part of the plan.\*\*

I decided to not take the dragons down to the docks, as that would freak the heck out of my dad. Instead, I convinced them to stay in the arena until further notice. Toothless was extremely pissed, and he wanted to come with me to protect me, but I had to keep him behind. I just couldn't risk it.

I ran down to the docks, unaware that I still had my riding gear on. I saw the boat approaching the dock, half of the port side burned off, the mast broken in half, the sail torn, and only about half the men on it than before. I could have sworn that we sent four ships out, but maybe my memory was just faulty.

I scanned the boat for my father, and I saw his immense figure standing tall against the other forlorn figures. The men hopped off of the boat and it sank to the bottom of the harbor, with just the tip of the broken mast sticking up out of the surface.

Gobber just looked down at the boat and huffed. "Well, now I know what I'm doing this afternoon," he said, looking rather depressed. I knew that hauling a boat out of the harbor was a lot of work, trust me, I know.

"Well, I trust you found the nest at least," he said, grabbing the supplies Stoick was carrying out of his hand.

"Not even close. We lost a lot of men Gobber, and we only just breached Helheim's Gate. We can't risk any more hunts. How is Hiccup doing?" he asked.

"Well that's the thing Stoick. There's something that you should know about your boy..." he began before I stopped him.

"I think that I can show him myself Gobber. Knowing him, he'll misunderstand anyway," I said.

"Will you two stop speaking in riddles! Just show me what you want to show me. I'm very tired right now, and I would like to get a good night's sleep," said Stoick.

"All right then, follow me," I said, leading him toward the arena.

"All right guys please go back into the cages for now, or you'll scare my dad. I promise you'll come out again. I won't let you be caged again," I said.

"Uh, Hiccup, what are you doing?" asked Stoick.

"Okay dad, don't...don't freak out okay. Toothless, there's someone that I'd like you to meet!" I called out, and Toothless came creeping out of the shadows, looking very mysterious and mythic.

I saw Stoick reach for his ax, but I just smiled and held it up from behind my back. I had managed to sneak it out right from underneath his nose while Toothless distracted him.

"What...why? Oh never mind. Night fury! You're done!" He yelled before leaping after Toothless.

"NO!" I yelled and dove at him, somehow managing to knock his bulk aside. "You will not hurt my friend. Dragons aren't bad, they can be really friendly once you get to know them," I said, trying to convince him.

"But they've killed hundreds of us!"

"And we've killed thousands of them!"

"That's irrelevant, Hiccup. I don't care if you can make it roll and over and lick your feet, no dragon is a friend. Now get out of my way and let me kill this dragon," He said.

"No," I stated simply, drawing up my measly bulk as high as I could, grabbing a short sword from nearby. "Dragons can be friends. Just let me show you."

"Out of my way Hiccup."

"I won't let you."

"OUT OF MY WAY!"

"Over my dead body!" I yelled, and Stoick grabbed an ax and swung at me, attempting to sweep me aside. I blocked the swing with the sword, catching the blade of the flat of my sword. Stoick looked surprised.

I just smiled.

"You know Stoick, I'm not the same man I was before. You're not getting through me, if it's the last thing I do!" I yelled, swinging my sword to bat the ax aside.

"I am chief! And your father! Yield to me!"

"Listen to me, for once in your life!"

"No, you listen to me. No dragon is befriending my son."

"Well too late. Toothless is my best and only friend, and you are not taking him away from me!"

"Then you're not my son, and I never want to see your face again!" he yelled.

I just stopped the fighting, throwing the sword away. "You know what, I think I'll do just that. Come on Toothless. We're out of here. Gang, let's go. We're not wanted around here," I said, hopping on Toothless and slipping my foot into the pedal and racing off through the door of the arena.

I heard Stoick say, "What does he mean?" before the teens hopped on their dragons and flew off. Gobber yelled up at me and the teens, "Get back here!"

"No Gobber. We're not wanted here," I yelled back, and I heard Gobber yell something else unintelligible, but we were already too far away to hear anything.

The weight of what I had just done sunk in. I had just been shunned by my only remaining family, even though he never really treated me like it. I had dragged the other teens into my predicament, and now we were all outcast from the tribe, and I knew that I couldn't show my face there again without being promptly locked up and shipped off to Outcast Island, pretty much a first class ticket to Valhalla. The only one that I would ever need was Toothless. Sure, Gobber was a good mentor, and I would miss him, but that was the one sacrifice. I even had my crush along for the ride, as well as the rest of the teens. That was a little bittersweet, but hey, you don't hear me complaining.

\_Thank you. For what you did back there. I know that it was hard for you,\_ said Toothless.

\_I did it for you Toothless, the only friend that I'll ever need. My father never treated me well anyway. We'll start a new life for ourselves somewhere else, on some other island. Like that one,\_ I said, pointing out a medium sized, lush island that was, quite surprisingly for its location, overflowing with vegetation.

"Hey guys! Let's set down over there!" I said, pointing out the island for them. They all nodded, and we flew over and landed.

The island was volcanic, like all of the islands in the archipelago, but with a flat plain on the shore of the island, surrounded by trees, with the mountain rising up behind it. While the land may have been rocky, the warmth from the bubbling volcano helped the life

prosper there. The volcano wasn't so much dormant nor was it active. The magma just bubbled near the top, warming the entire island, making it almost tropical. The place was stunning, perfect, picturesque.

"Wow, this place is awesome," said Astrid, who just gazed around at the magnificent island.

"Good, because we're living here now," I said, and I got several weird looks. "What? You realize we can't go back right? We need to stay somewhere, and I don't know about you, but I like it here," I said, walking around the field, mentally planning out housing.

"I'm in. What do you guys think?" said Astrid, casting a glance over at the group. They looked at each other before slowly nodding.

"Alright, for now we'll have to set up a camp until we can build housing. The dragons can provide us with all the protection we'll need, at least until we build. Ruff, Tuff, spread out, look for water. Astrid, I'm sure I can leave you in charge of hunting. Fishlegs, work on looking for edible plants. And Snotlout, I want you get a fire going. Me, I'm going to go check out that volcano," I said, and the others went about their jobs.

I was a little surprised how well they responded to my orders. I was expecting at least some questioning, but all I got was obedience. I was pleased, and I hopped on Toothless and we flew for the volcano.

I walked around the edge of the crater, staring into the fiery depths that lay in the volcano. There was nothing spectacular about it, but there was something about the land around it that gave me pause.

The land around the crater was full of black rock, a bleak landscape, unlike the rest of the island, but there were veins of a silvery substance running through it. On a hunch, I picked up a sizable rock of the substance and felt it over with my hand. As I guessed. I was sitting on an iron mine. There was so much of it, enough for everything that we would need. This was the best break we could get, and I was grateful for it. And with Toothless, we wouldn't even need a forge. A dragon with an unlimited shot limit, and acetylene no less, would be all the forge he would ever need. And Forge of course. Couldn't forget about him.

Forge had just managed to jump out of his hiding place and hop on Toothless's back as we were racing off, and I didn't even know that he had followed us until we landed. I was glad, really, that he had come. I loved the little guy.

I looked around a little more, and I started to see more veins, but these were different. Some were yellowish in color, and some were more silvery. I felt them, weighed them in my hand, and became very excited. There was also tons of gold and silver here, enough to make someone as rich as a king.

I headed back to the field, where I met up with the twins, who were trying to figure out which way they had gone to get water, Astrid, who had a few sizable rabbits and a small mountain goat, Fishlegs, whose helmet was full of berries, and Snotlout, who was sitting by



his rather large and toasty warm fire. I nodded in satisfaction, and walked over with one of the lumps of iron ore that I had found.

"So Hiccup, what's it like up there?" asked Fishlegs, looking very intrigued.

"Nothing exciting, but I did find this," I said, showing them the ore.

"Is that..." started Astrid.

"Iron ore. There's hundreds of veins of the stuff on the top of the volcano, as well as some gold and silver."

I heard Snotlout gasp by the fire at the mention of gold and silver.

"Did you say gold?" he asked, rubbing his hands together.

"Yes Snotlout, but you wouldn't have anywhere to spend it, so it's worthless. That and it'll take forever to mine it out of the rock," I said, and his face fell a little.

"Yeah, but gold is still gold, and I want it," he said.

I just sighed. "You'll have to wait, because it's getting dark. Let's get some dinner going, and then we'll tuck in with our dragons. We should have some of the homes built by tomorrow, but I'll have to forge a few axes really quickly in the morning. What do you say Toothless and Forge? You want to help me make some axes?" I asked.

\_Humph, why don't we just use the Timberjack that lives over there,\_ said Toothless, who pointed with his tail toward a cave that rested in the shadow of the volcano.

\_Why didn't you say something earlier?\_ I asked.

\_You never asked.\_

\_ Fair enough.\_

"Toothless says that there's a Timberjack that lives near here, so we'll be able to cut timber extra fast, and we may even have the houses finished by tomorrow," I said before heading over to the Timberjack's home.

I heard growling before I even got close, and I proceeded with caution.

\_Whoever you are, get away! This is my territory, and no goody two shoes dragon is taking this paradise away from me!\_ I heard him yell from the cave.

\_Hey, we mean you no harm. We only wish to live on the flat plain that rests at the foot of the mountain. This territory is still yours, but we need your help,\_ I said, trying to sound convincing in dragonese, a very hard thing to do.

\_A human who speaks dragon? What is this madness?\_ the Timberjack

asked, and he sauntered into the open to get a good look at me.

He must have had his wings folded up in the cave, or else he wouldn't have even been able to breach the entryway. His wingspan was massive, about twice as long as Toothless's. He was golden brown all over, the perfect shade to blend in with the dirt underneath my feet. His snout was long and thin, much like the Nightmare's.

\_My friends and I are friends of all dragons, unlike the tribe I come from. We want only peace, and we could use your mighty and fearsome wings to help us cut some timber for homes, \_I said.

\_What's in it for me then?\_ he asked, looking intrigued.

\_We'll give you food, if you want, and a better place to live than you're cramped cave, and we'll allow you to keep the majority of your territory, except for the small plain that we live on. How's that sound, \_I asked.

\_I like it. So what timber needs cutting?\_

\_ Nothing right now, but I'll let you know in the morning. Until then, sleep well, \_I said before sauntering off to the fire, where everyone was sitting and roasting their choice of food. I grabbed part of one of the rabbits and speared it on a stick, and started roasting it.

The others were giving me queer looks, and when I looked up, they were all still staring.

"What?" I asked.

"Nothing, it's just that you speaking dragon is slightly disturbing. I mean, you were just staring at that Timberjack for the longest time, conversing in growls. How do you do it?" asked Astrid.

"Well, the language is fairly simple. There are five sounds, the warble, the growl, the purr, the click, and the croon. All of the words are just inflections of those sounds, with some body language mixed in, but it's fairly simple. There's no articles or pronouns, so you kind of have to fill those in off of context," I said, taking a bite of my rabbit.

"That is so cool! Do you think you could teach us?" asked Fishlegs excitedly.

"Well, personally, I think that it's easier to learn from a dragon, so ask yours. Start with simple words, like yes and no. Practice them, and once you can get the hang of a word, ask for another. When you have enough words, start to ask for sentences, and then keep expanding your vocabulary until you have enough to speak fluently. It's not going to be immediate, so have patience. For right now, let's just focus on surviving here," I said, polishing off the last of my rabbit.

Everyone began to yawn, and we all turned in with our dragons. It took a little bit of convincing on the part of Snotlout to get him to cuddle up with his dragon, but in the end he capitulated and tucked in as well. I leaned us against Toothless and he put his wing against me, his warm body keeping me very comfortable.

For the second time that day, the force of what had happened to me hit me like a ton of bricks. I was free now, with my new friends. I could do whatever I wanted, be who I wanted, and no one could tell me otherwise. This just might be for the better.

\*\*I know, I know. Don't kill me for it. But hey, has anyone seen the leaked photos for what HTTYD 2 is supposed to look like? Hiccup turns so badass! I don't want to wait a whole year for this movie, it just looks too good. Let me know how you feel about it, and please, please review. \*\*

## 10. Reactions

### Chapter 10: Reactions

I was not to find about the events that happened on Berk after I left until much later, but as it is relevant to this part in the story, I suppose that it deserves to be told, but a word first before I tell their side of the story. When someone leaves you, are they ever truly gone? Do they not remain in all the memories that you had of them, to live on in immortality forever. Especially someone that you love? Even ones that we loathe, they live with us forever, we carry around their memories until the day we die. What these memories can do to one's conscience is something that has baffled man and beast for generations, the extent that grief and sorrow can wreak on one person's soul is too much to contain.

While this may seem like the ranting of a man who has lived many more years than yourself, it is in fact the words of a small boy who lost someone that he held dear at a tender age, me. I wrote those very words in my journal the night that my mother died, in all of my frustration and grief, and those words still haunt me, and when my father found my notebooks the year after I left, he cried for many hours afterward. I don't want to toot my own horn, but never before have I heard such wisdom come from someone of such young age. Think about it as I tell the tale of my father's reaction to my departure...

Stoick stood looking out at the door to the dragon arena, baffled, completely in shock, unaware how to react at all. He simply stared, gazing out into the sky, watching the black speck that was his son and his dragon disappear into the horizon until he disappeared from view all together. And then he fell to his knees and wept.

Gobber was quite shocked. Never before had he seen the great Stoick the Vast so much as shed a tear, and he had lived through some pretty horrendous things. Even after the loss of his wife, even after Hiccup's "death", Stoick never cried. Sure, he was depressed, and would spend many hours in his room, just staring out the window, lost in thought. But now, when he had just basically thrown his son out of his family, watched him hop on the back of the thing that he considered an enemy, that he wept.

Stoick's mind was a mess, a whirling mash up of emotions and thoughts, guilt, grief, disappointment, all of these swirled around his head.

"Odin, what have I done?" he asked himself quietly. "We need to go

after them," said Stoick, after he regained his composure.

"With what? They're on dragons, they could have gone anywhere in the world in half of the time that it would take us just to get a ship ready. You do realize that he was riding a Night Fury right?" said Gobber.

"I know, Gobber, but I have to try. I didn't mean what I said, I was just so upset with the latest dragon hunt. We lost so many good men to those beasts Gobber, and seeing that Night Fury, I just went into a rage. If only there was a way to get a message to him. I want him back again. Maybe he was even right about the dragons, but I can't just go befriending the very things that took her away from me," said Stoick.

Gobber just bowed his head, looking down at his feet. Stoick loved his wife, Valhalarma, like she was the world itself. She was a brilliant woman, a mighty warrior and very pretty. Both Gobber and Stoick had taken a fancy to her, and had competed for her affections, but Stoick had come out on top. When Valhalarma was crushed by a catapult that had been blasted by that selfsame Night Fury after helping a little one to safety, well, Stoick was never really the same. In fact, if Hiccup hadn't depended on Stoick, he may have just shut himself off from the world altogether and die slowly by himself, but Gobber never voiced his opinion.

At this point, the Terror that had liked Gobber climbed out of his corner and perched on Gobber's shoulder, his sharp claws digging into Gobber's shoulder. Gobber winced at this, but he shrugged it off.

"You know I think I'll have to call you Knife because your claws are like razor sharp knives," he said, scratching the dragon on the head.

"What the hell are you talking about Gobber?" said Stoick, who whirled around to see Gobber playing with Knife like it was a little cat. Stoick just watched the pair intently, just observing until he intervened.

"Gobber, what are you doing?"

Gobber jumped a little, dropping the little fish he had in his hand, which the Terror scooped up readily. "Oh, sorry Stoick. It's just that this little buddy took a liking to me when Hiccup was teaching us about dragon training, and he's become more attached to me than a tick to a beard," said Gobber as said Terror climbed on his shoulder once more.

"Hiccup trained that thing?" asked Stoick, suddenly intrigued.

"Yeah. I don't know how he did it, I was a little too busy hiding in the corner trying to keep my remaining limbs intact."

"You? Hiding?"

"You don't understand Stoick. Hiccup had all of the dragons in the middle of the ring, and he was just standing there like he was among family. I swear, he even spoke to them in their own language! That

boy is something special," said Gobber.

Stoick was silent for a moment before stating, "All the more reason to send out search parties. He's all I have left Gobber. I can't afford to lose him too." At this he walked off to organize the search parties.

When the parents of the other teens heard the news, they were devastated. How could their children just up and leave them like that? It didn't seem right. They loaded the boats up in a time that is still held in the record books of Berk to this day. They set sail in the direction that the dragons had flown off in, hopeful to find out where they had gone.

After about a week of searching, they gave up. They had found nothing, not even a trace of the teens or the dragons. They didn't know what to do.

All five families mourned the loss of the teens, as they were pronounced either dead or lost. No one quite knew how it could have happened, as the events of their departure were never released by Stoick.

Stoick ever forgave himself. He blamed himself for their leaving, which was partly true. His fury had been the trigger that had set Hiccup into action, and he felt extremely guilty. His vigor to kill all the dragons he found grew, and in the raids he was known to fly into a blood red rage where he thirsted for the blood of dragons, and only Gobber could calm his down.

Gobber just watched on, sad to see what Stoick was doing to himself. He tried to help, but nothing he did ever helped. Stoick's hate of dragons grew, even though Gobber tried to convince him that the dragons could be trusted. Gobber had to hide Knife because he had once stumbled upon Gobber with his hands around the dragon's throat, about to rip his head off. Gobber had tried to train dragons, but all he got from it was a nasty burn across his good leg, which ached a lot when he walked.

All in all, Gobber wished that Hiccup could come back. Stoick's grief was killing him, and it was all Gobber to do to stop himself from just up and committing suicide. To see his best friend reduced to such levels was deeply disturbing for Gobber.

Gobber knew that the other parents' reactions were not nearly as bad. All of them had other children to look out for, and couldn't fall into the same level of grief as Stoick. He knew, of course, that they still wept for their children in private. The Hofferson family had gone so far as to create a small shrine for Astrid, and visited it everyday.

What with Hiccup, Stoick's only heir, gone, Spitelout, Stoick's second in command and Snotlout's father, would have his second oldest son, Sticklout, take over as the heir. Stoick didn't want to do it, saying that Hiccup would come back someday, but he secretly knew that it wouldn't happen.

A year and a half after Hiccup's departure, Gobber found himself sitting at the top of a cliff overlooking the bay, gazing out at the sunset, nursing his burn wound that had never really healed. He was

thinking about Hiccup, about what he used to do, about how he used to try to act big and strong physically. Gobber knew about Hiccup's mental skills, hell, the boy was almost a better blacksmith than he was, if only he could gather the strength to do the heavy hammering. Gobber really loved Hiccup almost as his own son, who had perished along with his wife under the same raid as Valhalarma had.

As Gobber was lost in thought, he started to see a ship come into sight. It wasn't too large, about half the size of a longboat, but with a strangely fashioned triangular sail. He could just make out the crew six in all, including the captain, a man dressed all in black, standing at the helm. He was of average height, not exceptionally tall nor bulky, but enough of a figure to be formidable. When the ship got closer, he was able to make out the flag that flew from the mast, a black background with a large white gear and the head of a wrench coming down from the top.

Gobber had no idea who these strangers where, and he had never heard of flag or a sail like the one that this ship carried. He made his way to the docks, and waited for the strange ship to dock.

The captain hopped off of the ship, his dark clothing seeming to made of the scales of a dragon itself. On top of his black shirt and pants, and wore a hooded cloak that hid his face from view. He carried a sword on, strangely, his right hip. He drew it out, and it was quite a magnificent thing. Forged from a bright silver steel, the sword was inlaid with a decorative design near the hilt, and the handle was inlaid with silver and gold.

The stranger sheathed his sword, satisfied, and turned to address Gobber in a voice that sounded roughly familiar, but he wasn't sure where it was from.

"Hi. I am the Inventor. Perhaps you can help me."

\*\*Duh, Duh, DUHHH! The next chapter will be all about the events leading up to this point from "the Inventor's" point of view. I'm pretty sure that anyone with half a brain can figure out who he is, but anyone who doesn't, you'll find out in the next chapter.

\*\*

## 11. In the Interim

### Chapter 11: In the Interim

The morning after meeting the Timberjack, I woke up to see all of the teens gazing off the coast in the direction of Berk, their dragons right next to them. No one spoke, they just stared out into the ocean wistfully.

"Morning people. What are you looking at?" I asked, and Toothless walked up behind me.

"You see Hiccup, unlike you, we had families that loved us, cared for us, people that we love. Just leaving them like that, it's not easy. I know we can never go back now, but we miss our families," said Astrid, and everyone else nodded their agreement, and I would swear that I saw a tear or two in Snotlout's eyes, although I knew that he would never admit it.

"I'm sorry that I got you into this. I had no right to rope you into my problem, but I'm afraid that you're part of it now, and nothing we do can change that, so let's make the most of what we have here," I said.

"I agree, but it's still hard for us," said Fishlegs.

"I do know that, and I want to help you through that, and the best way to do that is to get your mind off of this, so let's get to work," I said.

I was facing a bit of a problem, because I had nothing to hold the houses that I wanted to build together. Making nails would take too long, and we didn't have any rope. I wracked my brain for a solution, and one finally came to me.

The idea that I had was to cut the logs in such a manner that they would stack together and like with each other to form a structure that was sturdy and rigid. It would be hard to do with just the Timberjack, so I knew that I needed an ax. I guessed I'd just borrow Astrid's until I could make a better one.

I woke the Timberjack, who I named Axsmith, and I got him to cut some of the basic logs for me. The dimensions I could worry about later, but I just needed something basic to work with.

Once I got the logs cut, I had the rest of the teens and their dragons help me drag the logs to the plain. I used a piece of paper to lay out a simple grid pattern. I put my house near the center, with all the other houses radiating outward, even laying out a separate house for Ruff and Tuff. I debated installing a forge too, but I didn't think it was necessary. I also laid out plans for a main eating hall and a food storage area. The plans involved 8 total buildings, each fairly large, so it would take about a week at the rate I was thinking, but it might take longer.

I had the teens help me cut the logs, mainly Astrid, as she had the ax, but the others chipped in as they could. The logs had to be cut down to size and the u-shaped cutouts made, which required an ax, but the others were using swords and spears. I set about making several more axes, but immediately ran into an issue.

Toothless's unlimited plasma blast, which I thought would enable me to forge things without a proper forge, but his blast did not have the desired effect on the metal that I wanted. No matter how hot he made the flame, it didn't just melt the metal, it incinerated it. Stormfly's fire did too. Forge's fire was perfect, but he had a low shot limit and couldn't hold it for long. So I added a forge to the list of buildings, and made it first priority.

Once the forge building was completed, I made a stone forge, with Toothless's help, and I soon had several wood shopping axes made, and progress on the other buildings advanced nicely.

Within a week the rest of our little "village" was completed. With the other teens help we were able to make furniture for all the houses, even leather furnishings, as it was discovered that there was a large quantity of deer on the island. Soon the island felt like home, and our lives settled into a routine existence. We followed a

pattern, doing the same thing day after day.

I decided that all of us needed new weapons, as the ones that they had were outdated, made when they were younger. I myself had forged those very blades, and I knew just how out of sync with their users they were.

The first was Astrid's ax. I scrapped the old one and started work with the new materials I had on hand. The iron ore from the mountain, as well as the silver and gold, was amazingly pure, almost perfect, so it required no refining, I could just work with it. I hammered out the metal after heating it, something that I had never had to do before, but I had seen Gobber do it hundreds of times.

The work made me stronger, much stronger, than I had been before. Hammering, something I had never been able to do before, I was now able to do with relative ease. I had no idea why, but I felt as if something had been holding me back for all of those years, but now I was free to grow, to get stronger, faster, better.

The work on the ax didn't take too long, and the handle took some work, but before long I had a simple ax completed. Somehow, it just didn't seem, right. I took some of the tools that I had made and got to work. I worked on an inlay pattern for the blade, a wide fractal type pattern that spread out from the base of the blade, the lines forming the shape of the sharp class symbol if one looked hard enough. I had to admit, it looked pretty cool. I worked on the handle as well, and since I had plenty of silver and gold on hand, I used them quite liberally, working a similar inlay pattern into the handle and shaft. When I was done, the thing looked fit for a queen, decked out in all of its glory.

Just as I was putting the finishing touches on the ax, Astrid walked into the forge. She took one look at the ax and her eyes widened.

"You made that?" she asked incredulously.

"Yup. I know a few things," I said grinning, handing her the finished ax. She twirled it experimentally. I could tell by the look on her face that she had never before seen an ax of such fine quality, not that I'm bragging or anything.

"This is amazing Hiccup. Thank you," she said, before hurling it a tree, the razor sharp edge digging into it until almost the whole blade was stuck. "It works well, don't you think?"

"Yeah, one down, four more to go," I said, readying my station for the next weapon.

"Four? Who are you forgetting?" she asked.

"I'm not forgetting anyone. There's Fishleg's hammer, Snotlout's mace, and the twin's spears, and that makes four."

"You're not going to make yourself something?"

"Why should I? I couldn't use it anyway."

"Not if you made it balanced so you could use it. You're smart enough



to do that I hope. I mean, look at the craftsmanship on this blade, surely you can replicate something for yourself."

"Yeah, but what kind of weapon would I use?"

"What are you most comfortable with?" asked Astrid.

"Well, that sword in the arena felt good, but there was something off about it, like I couldn't quite swing it right."

At this, Astrid seemed to get lost in thought, staring at what Hiccup was doing with his hands. When she seemed to come to a decision, she grabbed a wooden pole, what would have been the handle for Fishleg's hammer, and handed it to me.

"I want you to try something for me. Swing this pole like you would a normal sword," said Astrid.

I held it in my right hand and tried to swing it, but the motion felt awkward, forced almost. When I moved it one way, the pole slipped from my grasp and flew into the bowels of the shop. I grabbed it again, and began swinging, but Astrid stopped me.

"Now try it in your left hand," she said.

I was a little surprised by that comment, but I did as she said, and the movement felt so much better, so much more natural. I was able to be lithe and nimble with my left, whereas in my right, it was more a bludgeon.

"How did you know?" I asked.

"Well, when you were working, you seemed to use your left more than your right, so I took a guess and look where it got me."

I would have never guessed that I was a lefty, but know that I thought about it, I drew with my left hand too, and I never even thought about. Great, just add it to my list of weird, one of the only people in Midgard who's a lefty.

After that little confrontation, I went on to fashion all of the other teens' weapons, and they were very satisfied by the results. When they were all done, I moved on to mine.

This one I wanted to make extra specially, extra carefully, as it had to be extremely specified to me. The balancing was probably the hardest part, as I had to make it balanced for someone who was slightly weaker, but as I made the weapon, I realized that I had to make less accommodations for myself than I would have thought, thanks to my new found strength. The iron that I used for the blade I purified a little bit more, and it came out a perfect silver color, as I had with all the others. The ore from the mountain made some of the finest steel ever seen, and it was incredibly strong and lightweight.

After forging the blade and handle base, I moved on to the inlay on the blade. This one I made special, the curving lines spilling out from the handle forming the shape of the strike class if one looked carefully enough. The handle I wrapped in leather and inlaid with a similar pattern of silver and gold, and the cross guard I made in the

traditional fashion, just a simple u-shape that contained the blade of the sword, not the flaring flat cross guard of the English. I inlaid that with gold and silver as well.

When I was done, I stood back to look at my handiwork. It was beautiful, strong, perfectly balanced, and razor sharp. I took a few experimental swings and found it to be almost an extension of my arm.

After all of the weapons were made, Astrid took over as resident weapons expert, and we all trained with her to refine our skills. That girl was amazing with that ax of hers, moving it in lithe ways that would make a dragon jealous.

Fishlegs became our dragon expert, spending most of his waking time studying the many dragons that visited the island, including several new species of dragon that had never been witnessed before. These included the Reckless Avalanche, a boulder class dragon that can cause massive avalanches with its loud roar and large claws and can actually ride the avalanche, devouring everything in its path, and the Star of Day, a mystery class dragon that could make itself glow extremely brightly to scare away predators, and its glow could outshine even the sun in the day time, blinding their attacker. Needless to say, Fishlegs was about as giddy as a child on Snoggleto.

Snotlout became our resident hunter, him and Hookfang bringing in the majority of the kill for the rest of our village, Lorian. After a month of our living there, that name was agreed upon, because we were living a part of the lore of history, the first settlement to live harmoniously with dragons. Snotlout's character never really improved, but he seemed to respect me because I was the undisputed leader, for no other reason than that I knew how to organize and order things, and so it was decided unofficially from when we had set off from Berk that I should lead.

Who knew that the twins would be good at anything other than blowing things up? They became some of the best cooks that I have ever seen, and some of their best dishes are still held in extremely high regard in Berk to this day. When they weren't cooking, they were, true to nature, blowing things up, and they became experts in explosives and weapon designs, which I gladly made for them, so long as they didn't burn down the houses.

As for me, I was the dragon trainer, blacksmith, and leader, and I was, for the first time in my life, respected. It felt great, but I never lorded my power over the others. I did my share of the work, and never complained.

All of the teens eventually learned dragonese, but some better than others. Astrid and Fishlegs could speak it fluently, while Snotlout and the twins could only manage a rough equivalent, but their dragons also weren't the most cooperative, but they managed.

I took a lot to inventing, coming up with several unique designs. One of which I was very proud of, although it nearly took my head off the first time.

I was curious about Toothless's fire, as it was so different from the others, so I decided to capture it in a special heat proof

jar.

\_Okay Toothless, I need a low powered blast to that jar.\_

Toothless obliged, and I managed to get the jar's lid shut in time, but the thing had an energy all of its own, the jar wriggling and shaking like it was possessed. I peered through the little window that I had created out of the special glass that Forge could make, and I saw Toothless's fire, formed into perfect floating ball in the center, shaking with all get up, but nothing like fire. It was a bright blue, and it seemed to move more like a liquid than anything else.

I wanted to poke it with a rod, just to see what would happen, so I opened up a little port in the jar and inserted a small rod, made of heat tempered gold, which I found to be very useful around dragon fire.

Thank all of the gods above I wasn't actually touching the rod when it hit the fire, or I may have died right then and there. It had slipped out of my grasp just before it hit the ball of energy, and when it connected, a bolt of lightning sprung from the rod and slammed into a nearby tree, thankfully not me, but the tree nearly crushed me. I just managed to roll out of the way in time.

My discovery was intriguing, as I knew of no substance that could create thunderbolts like that besides storms. I got an idea for a way to direct it, and got to work. My final project came out with a crossbow shaped weapon with the jar strapped to the back and a trigger that would move the golden rod into the plasma. I was able to direct the bolt by discharging it through a tunnel made of leather, which oddly enough, seemed to repel lightning. After that, the bolt would go fairly straight, although I had a few boomerang bolts that hit that base of the weapon, which I had nicknamed Thor II.

Also, since we grew, we needed new clothes. The dragons had recently shed their scales, so I came up with a brilliant idea to turn it into cloth, which was surprisingly supple and warm, and with Astrid's help, soon all of the teens had their own clothes that matched their dragon perfectly. I had to say, they looked pretty cool. We made pants and shirts for everyone, as well as a cloak.

One afternoon, after about a year of living like this, Toothless and the other dragons approached me.

\_Hiccup, there's something that we would like to show you, if you feel up to it,\_ said Toothless, the undisputed leader of the dragons.

\_Alright, I'm game, what is this thing?\_ I asked.

\_We can only show you, not tell you.\_

\_ I'll call the others then,\_ I said.

Once I gathered all of the other teens, we flew off on our dragons, heading in the direction of Helheim's Gate. I just went along with it, steering Toothless in the direction that we needed to go. When we arrived at our destination, I was awestruck.

It was a mountain, about twice as big as all of Berk, and it was a barren wasteland. It looked like there was no sign of anything living. Just when I thought that they had brought us out into the middle of nowhere for nothing, a cacophony of sounds hit my ears, and I needed to plug them, or else they would have ruptured. I heard hundreds of dragons' voices screaming all at once, for a reason that I couldn't quite make out.

The dragons took us inside a massive cave, and we saw the dragons dropping food into a giant pit in the center of the cave.

"Well, it's satisfying to know that all of the food is being dumped down a hole," I said.

"They're not eating any of it," said Astrid.

Just as she said that, a small bumblebee of a Gronkle fluttered into the center of the arena and regurgitated a small fish, and then tried to fly away, but a massive jaw flew up from the pit's depths and devoured the Gronkle whole.

Just from the head I could tell that the beast was massive, and all the other dragons flew away in panic.

"Get us out of here bud," I said, and we made to fly away, but then I heard the monster speak.

\_What is this?! Humans! In my Domain!\_

It almost ate us, but a Zippleback flew in its way and distracted it, and we just barely escaped with our lives.

When we landed, I took a deep breath, trying to calm my racing nerves.

\_Now you see why we could not show you earlier. The queen has been a plague on all dragons for generations. She uses a mating call to control the other dragons, making them bring her food by raiding your home and others. But being with a human companion, your strength of will and companionship is able to block off the queen's call, and we are able to live in peace with you,\_ explained Toothless.

"Wow. That's, that's heavy. What do you guys think we can do about it?" I asked the gang, who shared uneasy looks.

"I don't think we'd stand a chance against such a beast. There's too few of us," said Snotlout.

"Agreed, but if we had a certain viking village on our side..." said Astrid, and I got what she was hinting at.

"Do you really think that \_they\_ would want to free the dragons. They've hated them for so long! And they threw us out because of it!" I said.

"Still, if we can get them to help us, we might have a chance," said Fishlegs.

I sighed. As much as I didn't want to admit it, they were right. "Alright, we'll do it, but we can't go on dragons, or else we won't

be able to gain anyone's trust. I say we go disguised, and not let on who we are until we know that we can trust them. We'll have to slowly warm them to the idea, and not rush it. I'll get working on a boat design," I said, moving off to my workshop.

I knew that a standard square rigged viking ship was fast, but it couldn't turn all that well. The design that I had in mind was something that I stole from Toothless when he was gliding, that winged shape seeming to be able to catch the wind so much better.

The boat took a long time to make, and it had to be made to perfection to make it float. I had to make pitch from scratch out of pine sap, a slow and tedious process. Once I had it built I had to test it to make sure that it worked, and once I was satisfied, I showed it off to the others.

The boat was low to the water and lean, with a figure of a night fury carved into the bulkhead. The sail was triangular, and curved more to accept the wind, and the thing could turn on a dime if properly handled. On the mast flew a flag of my own design. It was black, with a white gear and a wrench head coming down from the top. The mark of the Inventor.

The others were suitably impressed, but intrigued by the flag.

"That's our cover story. We're going in to Berk under the pretense of me being a man known as the Inventor, and selling my inventions to the people, and while we're there, we can gain their trust," I explained. The others liked the idea, and we supplied the ship.

Before we set sail, I had to work on a new tail for Toothless. He didn't at all like the self controlled tail I had made for him a while back. So, to appease him, and still make him able to fly on his own, I made a two layered tail, so that he could fly solo when I wasn't there, but when I was, I could take control. He seemed satisfied by that, and soon we set off.

The dragons flew direct to the island, to wait for us in the cove, while we sailed to Berk on the boat. The ship, nicknamed the Dragon's Wing, skipped across the waves at breakneck speed, and we were in sight of Berk in only a few hours. We came into port, and I hopped off, making sure my hood on my cloak was up, and checked my sword to make sure it was ready for use should the situation need it.

I then turned toward the man staring at me, who happened to be Gobber. I couldn't suppress my smile, and I said in a gruffer version of my voice, "Hi. I'm the Inventor. Perhaps you can help me."

**\*\*For anyone who want to get a look at what the Dragon's Wing would look like, go to Google Images and search "brotherband chronicles the heron". The idea for the ship comes from there, so imagine that but with a night fury head instead of a heron.\*\***

## 12. The Inventor

### Chapter 12: The Inventor

Gobber looked, well, gobsmacked, and I could tell that he didn't quite know what to make of me. I guess I was a but more formidable of a force than I was before. I was definitely taller, and also stronger, not stocky, but lean and mean, and with my sleek black clothes and cloak, I must have looked pretty amazing. Not that I'm tooting my own horn at all.

After Gobber got over his shock, the other teens got off the boat and stood behind me, and we made a fairly formidable line. Gobber's jaw opened again, and he was speechless for a few moments.

When he regained his composure, he managed to say, "What can I help you with?"

"Well, we just need help unloading our stock. I am an avid inventor, hence the name, and I have decided to peddle my wares to the many islands around here, including Berk. My crew and we have some items we thought that you might like, and we brought them here. Just have some men bring out those four crates and set them on the docks, we'll be good. I need to speak to your chief. Do you know where I can find him?" I asked, trying my best to mask my voice, but it had already deepened fairly

substantially already. Thank the gods for puberty.

"Um, yeah, he should be by the Great Hall. It's just through the village square and up the steps. You can't miss it," said Gobber, and he got some of the dock hands to unload the crates I had pointed out. I headed to the Great Hall and the other teens went off on their own ways. I had no idea where they'd go, but I had told them to not blow our cover, so I was fairly sure that they wouldn't screw it up, but then again, it was the twins and Snotlout that we're talking about, but even their smart enough to realize the gravity of the situation. I hope.

I walked up the steps to the Great Hall, taking in all the changes around the village. I must say, almost all the buildings were new, but when you're constantly plagued by winged, fire breathing dragons, buildings tend not to last too long, so I wasn't too shocked. Other than that though, nothing much had changed. I guess the village was just so set in its ways that they never really changed.

I walked in and saw Stoick in the corner, settling a dispute between two angry looking vikings. Boy, had he changed. The man who was always bright and cheery with just a hint of angry was gone, replaced by a man that simply looked tired, distraught, almost worn out. He looked disheveled, and I felt sorry for him.

He settled the dispute and sat down, chugged a mug full of mead, and just sighed. I went over to him and addressed him, holding out my hand for a handshake.

"Hey, I'm the Inventor. Just sailed in. I came here to ask your permission to peddle my wares to your people," I said.

He accepted my handshake and replied, "Nice to meet you. I can't say I've heard of you before, but you seem familiar. Anyway, all trading is allowed here, so feel free to sell anything that you want, and enjoy your stay on Berk," he said, settling into another long mug of

ale. He looked miserable. I'd have to ask him about it later, but now it was time to sell.

Gobber had apparently told the entire village about the mysterious "Inventor" that had come to town, and almost the entire village had gathered around the strange crates that rested on the dock. I smiled and cracked the first one open.

Out came several different items. They consisted of several unique crossbows, a bomb, and an ax with detachable blades. The crowd got very excited, and I set the items on the top of the crate and cracked open the next one, which contained a modified version of the bola launcher that I had used to take down Toothless, but this one fired nets. The third crate contained several hand crafted swords and hammers, and the last one contained several retractable knives, a whip, and a device that could catch fish from a boat by using sound to scare the fish into the net.

I laid them all out on the crates, and I was getting offers from the villagers left and right. I eventually set up an auction system, and the offers I got were fairly good. I wasn't really interested in livestock as much as I was with materials and nicknacks, and I said so.

I was able to get rid of the inventions, not really my best work, but work enough, for some pretty good stuff. I got an amethyst necklace, a whole 5 pounds of copper, a dragon tooth pendant, and a hand carved Nightmare, beautifully painted and glossed, among other things.

I knew that none of the weapons that I had sold them would actually do anything harmful to dragons, maybe an injury or two, but they had to be convincing enough so that they would be bought so that we could have a purpose there instead of just being there as visitors, as that would be suspicious.

It was starting to get dark, so we packed up our wares and went back to the boat, which I had nicely outfitted to accommodate beds hidden underneath the benches, and with the simple pull of a lever, the bench could be flipped over and transformed into rather luxurious beds. A tarp could be stretched from both bows to the mast to form a crude sort of roof to protect us from the elements.

We settled in comfortably, and I had to admit, I had made the thing really well. The ship was strong, lightweight, and well equipped for just about anything. It was one of the jewels of my collection of inventions.

Just as I was about to fall asleep, I heard Gobber's voice from outside the tarp.

"Uh, anyone in there? Inventor?" He asked.

I hastily threw on my hood and answered, "Yeah, what do you want? I was just about to fall asleep."

I lifted the tarp so I could see Gobber, and he looked fairly surprised to see that I was in a bed.

"You know, there really is something about that voice that reminds me of someone I used to know. I can't quite put my finger on it, but it

kind of reminds me of my old apprentice, Hiccup," he said, and I smiled underneath the hood. "He was a great boy, but, he met some...challenges and ran away with many of the other teens. I still think about him a lot," he said, his eyes going a little dreamy.

"So you woke me up just to reminisce?" I asked.

"No, but I was sent to ask if you and your crew would like to occupy the guest house, but I see that you apparently have arrangements of your own. If you want to, the offer is still open," he said.

"I think we're good here Gobber, but thank you for the offer," I said.

"Tomorrow perhaps, could you show me some of the techniques you used for those inventions of yours? You obviously have skill," asked Gobber.

I nodded. This was usual for visitors to Berk, and it was the best way to learn new techniques and methods. Also, this would give me a chance to gain more trust from Gobber and the others.

"Sure Gobber. I'll even bring some of my own iron, gold, and silver to work with. It's the best stuff I've ever seen," I said.

"Alright then, I guess I'll see you in the morning," he said, and sauntered back from whence he came.

I stayed awake for a little while after Gobber left, just thinking of my plan. Should I just up and tell them who I am? Or should I draw this out, like I had planned to? I knew that Gobber was extremely suspicious, but he was the only one. Everyone else just never knew me well enough to recognize me even after I had changed so much. I almost wanted to tell him, but then it would throw off my entire plan, so I had to keep low.

The next morning brought the sun streaming in through the tarp, and I woke up and took a nice morning jog, like I was always did, and then proceeded to the Great Hall for breakfast, where I met up with the others.

We sat together at the same table that we sat in before we left, just like old times, but our hoods were still up so that no one would recognize us, but I could see Gobber looking our way, measuring us up with his thumb as if to try to figure out who we looked like. I saw him turn toward Stoick, and so that I could hear them, I pretended that I dropped something, and then pulled out my sound amplifier.

"I'm telling you Stoick, they remind me of...ugh, I just can't put my finger on it, but I know that I've seen them before," said Gobber.

"Well, if you can, try to get them to remove their hoods. It'll be easier to tell who they are if we can actually see them," said Stoick.

"I have an appointment with the leader, that Inventor fellow today, so I may be able to figure out who he is then," said Gobber.



I came back from underneath the table, pocketing my amplifier. I gave a look to the others, and they knew what I meant, but I said it anyway.

"Gobber's suspicious. I think I may be able to tell him who I am, but I'm not going to let him tell anyone else. If you trust you parents enough not to tell anyone, you can tell them, but make sure you tell the whole story, and be wary. If need be, contain them. We can't let the word spread too fast, or we'll have catastrophe on our hands," I said.

The group simply nodded and went back to eating. After breakfast, the group all went their separate ways, and I walked over to Gobber, who was downing his last mug of morning ale.

"Ready to get started?" I asked, and he gave me a thumbs up as he finished downing the mug. He wiped the foam from his mouth and said, "Let's get to work."

We walked down to the forge, and Gobber made attempts at a conversation meant to unhinge me.

"So, where do you hail from?" he asked.

"My crew and I are from Lorian, a settlement on a beautiful island," I replied, trying not to give too much away.

"Never heard of it."

"Not many have. It's relatively new, only about a year and a half old," I said.

Gobber looked like he was thinking in overdrive, trying to decode my statement, and when he came to his own conclusion, he asked another question. "Why are you wearing that hood again?" he asked.

"I don't trust you enough to tell you who I am. People were never very accepting of me in my home before I founded Lorian, so I am more cautious by nature. Ah, and here we are," I said as we reached the forge. Gobber wanted to say more, but I simply ignored him and picked up two of the crates of ore and brought them into the forge, Gobber grabbing the other two.

"You're strong, young fellow," said Gobber.

"Thanks. I wasn't at all very strong when I founded Lorian, all I had was up here," I said, tapping my skull.

Now I knew that Gobber had an idea who I was, and I could see him itching to ask.

"Before you ask another question about me, let me show you a few of my techniques," I said, turning toward the forge. I got out a few ingots of iron, and heating them up in the forge, proceeded to hammer them out into a short sword in a matter of minutes, a process that would normally take 10-20 minutes. I explained my process to Gobber, who nodded and wrote it down, which I was surprised about because I had never seen Gobber write before.

I showed him several more techniques, but when I was about to go onto one about lens making, I spotted a little Terror scuttle into the shop, and I recognized it as the one that Gobber had when I had left.

He shuffled over to me, sniffing my leg, and I picked him up and placed him on my shoulder.

"Knife! No! Down from that man!" yelled Gobber.

"Gobber, Gobber, calm down. You need to be gentle around these creatures," I said, stroking him underneath the chin.

Gobber's jaw literally dropped, and I saw his mouth moving to form the question, but to avoid awkward conversation, I reached up and undid my hood.

"Hiccup?" he asked.

"The one and only! How have you been Gobber? We have a lot to talk about," I said grinning.

### 13. In Which a Story is Told

#### Chapter 13: In Which a Story is Told and a Secret is Learned

Once again, and this was becoming a pattern, Gobber was just left staring with no words, which is just weird because he was always so good with words. He always had a pun for everything that anyone ever said, and to leave him speechless was actually a huge accomplishment, but I had to get him over it.

"Um, Gobber? Anyone in there?" I asked, moving my hand in front of his face. He shook himself out of his daze and started to try to put words together, but it just came out as, "What...who...how...the...but...?"

I kind of felt bad for the guy, and I knew he deserved an explanation.

"Gobber, Gobber, calm down. I'll explain everything, but first, swear to me that you won't tell least for a little bit, to all but a select few people. So I would really appreciate it if you just stayed quiet and let me tell my story before you go running off and telling everyone," I said.

Gobber simply nodded, settling down into a chair near the forge, which he always liked to sit in on cool afternoons and rest his peg leg.

"So, where to start? Well probably the very beginning, it's usually a very good place to start. So, as you could probably deduce on your own, I was very angry at my dad's attempt to kill Toothless, the Night Fury, that I just reacted and flew off with the teens. I knew that I couldn't come back. My dad had practically banished me for befriending a dragon, and for all of our sakes, I decided to not come back. I'm sure my dad will still hate me, but that's something that needs to be overcome for the greater good," I said.

"Ay, but there you were wrong. Your father was very stressed from the nest hunt, and when he saw the dragon, he just wanted revenge. After you all flew away, he broke down, weeping bitterly about you leaving, wanting to send search parties out after you, but I had to dissuade him. He's never been the same since, even getting this sort of blood lust in battle, killing everything in sight. He never got over the loss of Valhalarma to begin with, but he had to take care of you. When you left, we assumed you were dead, and he just lost his mind. Now he's just this tired, exhausted shell of a man. I'm sure he would love to know that his son is alive," he said.

I did a bit of a double take. My dad sentimental? It didn't seem possible. I had never known love from my father, not so much as a sign that he even liked me. I had no idea he was even capable of any kind of emotion, he had always been so focused on being chief that he never gave me any time.

It was also part of the reason that my mother and I were so close. My mom loved me the way my father never did. She cared for me, appreciated what I did, hell, she even got me over my fear of dragons when I was younger. I used to be mortified of the beasts, I even hated the little stuffed Nadder my mom had made for me, but she got me through it, and even started a fascination of the beasts I once feared. That is, until the night she died. After that, my obsession with learning more about dragons fell dormant, replaced with an overwhelming urge to kill them, both to avenge my mother's death and to prove myself.

I still couldn't believe Gobber. "Are you sure Gobber? I never even knew the man had feelings," I said.

Gobber looked stunned, and a little bit hurt. "Oh come on Hiccup. I know he never showed you that he loved you, but he did. Why do you think that he put you as an apprentice to me, huh?" asked Gobber.

"Because I was a weak, useless stick-in-the-mud!" I yelled.

"No! He did it to protect you. He didn't want you getting hurt, and he knew that you'd never be a warrior, so he gave you a job, a purpose, where you wouldn't kill yourself, and you have to agree, you do have a knack for crafting things," said Gobber, picking up a wooden carving from one of the work tables.

I had to smile at that. The carving was one of Gobber and my dad standing next to each other, smiling, with their swords drawn, looking rather menacing. I remembered well carving that thing when I was about seven. Even that young I had a knack for that sort of stuff.

"Yeah, you remember this one. I still cannot believe the level of detail you put into this thing. And you were only seven! You have a gift Hiccup," said Gobber.

"Yeah, too bad my dad was too busy trying to turn me into a true Viking warrior," I muttered. "Although I guess you can't really blame him for trying. I was always just a disgrace to him anyway, him being the biggest man in the village and me being the smallest, weakest Viking Berk has ever known."

"Now don't think about it that way. As I've said before, it's not what you look like, but what's inside that he can't stand," said Gobber.

"Yeah, like what?"

"Well, your naturally rebellious nature, for one. Also your total disregard of personal safety, and the fact that, and don't tell him I said this, but he fears that you are smarter than him, which is, at times, true, although he has the experience. \_That\_ combined with your physical ineptitude just combines to make a mix that is just not compatible, especially to a man who just favors brute strength," said Gobber.

I just grunted my agreement, fiddling with some nearby gears and pieces of metal.

"Care to tell me how that sucker works?" asked Gobber, gesturing to Thor II, the blaster on my hip.

"I don't know Gobber. This one's special to me, and it contains a little something from a friend of mine, who I think you should properly meet for the first time. Let's go on a little road trip shall we?" I said, flipping up my hood. "Come on out back."

We walked to the back of the shop, out the back door that only Gobber and I knew existed, and into the forest. Once we were a good ways in, I whistled for Toothless.

The onyx dragon flew out of nowhere, flying so fast he was only a black blur, and landed in the clearing where we were.

\_Hey Toothless. You remember Gobber don't you?\_ I asked.

\_Of course. The two-limbed one was always good to us, at least for that one day, when he wasn't wetting himself in the corner\_

I had to laugh. It was just too funny to see that scene again, Gobber whimpering in the corner when I brought the dragons out, but now he was definitely more confident around the beasts, as he was around his own little Terror.

"What are you laughing at, boy?" asked Gobber.

"Oh nothing. Toothless just mentioned something that made me think back to the day I left and you just sitting in the corner whimpering," I said.

Gobber's face went beet red, and I knew I had struck a nerve, but he laughed along and pretended that nothing was wrong, although after awhile I think he realized just how stupid he had been.

"You ready to take your first ride on a dragon?" I asked, offering out my hand to Gobber.

"Are you sure Hiccup? Can he support both of us?" asked Gobber.

"Oh he's held up more weight than you, trust me," I said, thinking back to how he had helped us lift the logs for our houses into position, which weighed about five times as much as Gobber

did.

"Alright, but don't go fast, and make sure I don't look down. I'm not quite fond of heights," he said, glancing nervously at the sky.

"The great Gobber, scared of heights?" I asked.

"Everyone has their weakness."

"Fine, but after Toothless is done with you, we should have that out of the way. Just climb on behind me and we'll be off," I said, running and then flipping onto Toothless's back.

"Since when have you been able to do that?" asked Gobber.

"Turns out I'm pretty quick and nimble, at least, ever since I met Toothless. I just feel like something was holding me back for all those years, but Toothless just released it from me. Come to think of it, it all really started that day I banged my head. It was bleeding but Toothless just licked it and by the end of the day, the wound was healed, not even a scar," I said.

Gobber seemed to be thinking about something, and was about to say something before I nudged Toothless with my leg and we took off.

Gobber didn't even blink, just sat back and took the whole thing in, although I saw him pale when he saw how high we went. He just took the whole thing in stride, and after a few minutes, he actually seemed to enjoy it.

Toothless got a little antsy, and started doing some tricks, just a few simple flips and twirls, something he and I did on a regular basis, but Gobber was not at all prepared for them. He screamed and clung to me like a little girl, as I had done the first time we tried them, except I clung to Toothless. Once he got used to them, he enjoyed those too, even requesting them from me.

After a steady hour and a half of flying, we touched back down on the forest floor, and Gobber hopped off onto his unsteady feet and toppled over.

I smiled. It was something I referred to as 'flight legs', where after an hour or so of flying, one's legs become so accustomed to the motion and the balancing act that they're not used to flat ground, and you become disoriented. I was used to it, so it didn't affect me, but I had to help Gobber onto his feet again, several times after we got off of Toothless.

"Odin's beard, I feel so weird right now," said Gobber.

"How poetic Gobber," I smirked.

"What? Oh, it rhymes. Haha, hilarious. Do you always have a joke under your sleeve?"

"Of course. I hid behind my sarcasm and humor for all of those years that I was bullied, and it just became a habit. Plus, it makes conversations so much more interesting," I said.

"I'll say. Some of those really catch a person off guard."

"You mean like this?" I said, drawing my sword and swinging at Gobber's head, just barely shaving a whisker from his face.

Gobber jumped, and then felt his face to see if everything was still there, and sure enough it was. Well, everything but his missing whisker.

"Nice shave. Very close," he remarked. "Where did you learn to fight like that?"

"I taught myself, along with Astrid's help. It helps to actually have a weapon you can hold," I said.

Gobber seemed to get lost in thought again, staring into the distance. I snapped my fingers under his nose to snap him out of it.

"Sorry Hiccup. I was just thinking about something, an explanation for how you suddenly became...well...you."

"Do explain," I said.

"Well, when you were little, and barely anyone besides Stoick and I know this, but you suffered from Wasting Disease. You were about three when it happened, and you were actually bigger, not huge, but average," he said.

I gasped. Wasting Disease was a disease that afflicted the very young, and it would leach all of the nutrients right out of a child's body, reducing them to nothing more of a twig, and then thinner, until nothing was left. Not many survived.

"We took you to Gothi, but she could only do so much. She was able to slow it down, but it never really went away. As far as I know, you never rid yourself of the illness, although Gothi was always able to keep it suppressed enough to allow you to survive, which is why you were always so skinny and weak, no matter what you did. That's not to say that none of the other teens aren't skinny, I mean, look at Ruff and Tuff, but they're strong. You on the other hand, were just weak and skinny. But, and I'm taking a guess here, maybe Toothless was able to heal you fully, and enable you to actually become stronger," said Gobber.

I sat down against a nearby rock, just taking it all in. It explained so much, my total clumsiness and ineptitude, no matter how much I ate or worked out, and then the sudden disappearance of it when Toothless came. It just seemed so incredulous.

"Why did no one tell me?" I asked.

"We didn't want you to have another reason for people to bully you or pity you. That and it was a blow to Stoick's pride, to have his son reduced to nothing by the Wasting Disease."

"I guess that makes sense, but why not just tell me, no one else?"

"To protect you. If you knew you had Wasting Disease, you would have

done anything to find a cure, or do something about it, which would have just hurt you more."

I nodded. That much was true. If I knew I had Wasting Disease, I would have stopped at nothing to find a cure, experimenting with dangerous herbs and mixtures, and I probably would have killed myself.

"Well, that explains a lot," I said simply.

"No kidding. But now, what are you going to do about Stoick?" asked Gobber.

"I'm going to reveal myself tomorrow, I'm not sure, but I'll probably make it spectacular. Then it's down to business. I didn't just come here to get reacquainted. We need your help."

>I explained the issue of the Red Death, and Gobber's eyes widened.<p>

"How can that be possible?" asked Gobber.

"I don't know, but it is, and we'll need all the help we can get to take it down."

"Well then, I'll pack my undies. Be careful though, around Stoick. Just don't break him anymore than he already is," said Gobber.

"Don't worry. I'll make sure to make my return from the dead very memorable," I said with an evil smile.

## 14. The Raid

### Chapter 14: The Raid

I landed back at the forge, dropping off Gobber and letting Toothless roam. I wandered into the the forge, grabbing a hammer and just pounding out some metal to relieve my stress. Although I had a plan, my plan had many loopholes, many failure points, and I knew I needed to think about it. Metal working just let me think, the constant, mindless hammering allowing my mind to float free.

I was feeling nervous about revealing myself and the others. Considering my father's violent reaction the first time he encountered trained dragons, it just made me worried about what could happen if we reveal it to him again. Also, considering his mental state that Gobber had told me about, well, it didn't exactly help.

That and there was that other bomb that had been dropped on me by Gobber. I had Wasting Disease for all of those years, and no one had told me? I hadn't even figured it out myself, even with my good deduction skills. And then Toothless somehow cured me? I had to ask him about that sometime.

I looked down at my work and discovered that in my mind wandering I had crafted a sword, a darn good one from the poor iron that Gobber had on him. I had even sharpened it without knowing it, my hands just working automatically to craft something I had crafted many times

before. I took it out back to test it out.

I swung it smoothly at a rather thick tree branch, slicing it right through the branch like a hot knife through butter. Satisfied, I swung the sword around experimentally, just to get a feel for the balance, a diagnostic I always did.

"You've really got a gift there, Hiccup," said Gobber.

"Gobber! Remember, I'm the Inventor out here right now. You can't blow my cover yet. I have a plan, and I'll stick to it." Just to show off, I tossed the sword into the air and it spun lazily and rotated twice before falling straight back into my hand. I then through it overhand at a tree, where it stuck like a pin.

"How about that? Razor sharp, perfectly balanced. The iron's a little poor, but it should stand to some wear," I said, plucking the sword from the tree and handing it handle first to Gobber.

"For the master, of course," I said.

Gobber took the sword and swung it experimentally, and I could tell that he really liked it.

"Nice work Hic...Inventor," he said, catching himself.

"Glad you like it. I just started to hammer out some metal, my mind wandered, and hey presto! I've got a sword. Figured you'd need a reliable weapon after all these years," I said. "I mean, besides you're stump."

Gobber glanced to his stump of an arm, with it's current hook attachment. He occasionally wore a weapon on its interchangeable head, but I knew he liked to fight with the other hand.

After giving Gobber his sword, I wandered the village a little, taking in the sights and sounds of a life that I had run from, a life that I had left behind, but now had to embrace again.

It was starting to get dark, so I made my way to the ship when I heard the oh-so-familiar roar of a Monstrous Nightmare and a Deadly Nadder. I then heard the call of the drum that signaled dragon attacks, nothing more than a hollowed out log with a piece of deer hide covering it and smacked with a bone, but its tone reverberated all over Berk, warning of a raid.

I cursed under my breath. Of all times to have a dragon attack, now was about the least opportune time. I ran to the boat where I met the others, who gave me questioning looks.

"Alright, here's the game plan. Aim to capture and disarm but do not kill, and try to prevent killing. Throw off their aim, get in the way, anything. I need to sort out this mess," I said.

Everyone nodded and ran off to the battle. I wasn't worried. These were the finest warriors I could ask for, and I trusted them. I ran off too, managing to snag a little sleeping powder. Of course, Thor II was still strapped to my hip, and I could use that to varying effects, if I just toned down the power.



I adjusted the dial to stun, and ran off to the battle.

Chaos. That's probably the best way to describe the scene. Warriors were everywhere, running around like chicken with its head cut off. Dragons were just taking what they wanted and leaving, no doubt to feed big mama back at the nest. I cursed again. These Vikings were hopeless.

Well, I shouldn't say that. They were managing to secure a few and incapacitate some, but a lot got away scot free. I grabbed Thor II and shouldered it, blasting a Nadder that was stealing a sheep, stunning it but not knocking it unconscious.

I ran off to find another one to scare off, but I ended up tripping over a downed barrel and falling on my face, which did not help my morale, but I got up and ran off again.

I couldn't help but notice though, that Gobber was nowhere to be seen. I looked around, but he wasn't in sight. When I did see him, he was working diligently at the blacksmith, not even glancing up at the chaos surrounding him. Good old Gobber.

As I watched, I saw him sneak a piece of fish to his Terror in a spare moment, and I grinned. Gobber was such a softie once you got to know him. You just had to penetrate his tough outer shell.

I ran off and scared off several more Nadders and a Gronkle, and I even managed to knock out a few with sleeping powder, just to keep appearances up, although I knew it wouldn't last long.

I stole a glance at my father, and my jaw dropped in shock. He was in a full berserk blood rage, something I had only seen once before in a warrior, and he managed to get himself killed. Blood, thick dragon blood, stained his tunic and luscious beard, and his eyes were bloodshot. His ax was stained bright red with fresh blood, and his mouth was open, screaming, slaying dragons left and right.

It made me extremely sad, both for the loss of draconic life and for where my father had gone. His mind had passed, and he was only a shell of man. It was saddening to see, but I knew that it would all be over quickly.

I heard him yelling as he slew them screaming things like, "That's for my son!" or "That's for Val!" and then splitting them open like fruit.

I had to stop him, had to stop his blood rage. He was going to get himself killed. In fact, when I looked, some of the blood that stained his tunic was not draconic, it was his own. I raced after him as he ran down the streets, eager for dragon blood.

I caught up to him and tried to placate him, but nothing but blood would soothe the man.

"Stoick, get a grip on yourself!" I yelled, slapping him full on in the face, which was basically signing my death off to the Norns.

Stoick seemed to focus for a second before slipping into his rage again.

"No! They killed Val and took my son! You wouldn't understand, Inventor!" he scoffed.

I was a little taken aback. He really did care for me, for all of those years, he had actually had a heart. He wasn't just the noble chief, he actually loved me. And my leaving had shattered him. I felt so sorry for him, and I felt so guilty for letting something like this happen, and I needed to fix it.

"Don't worry, Stoick. It'll be okay. You'll get your son back," I reassured him.

"And how would you know?" he scoffed again and struggled to get back to the fight.

"Because I met him, and I know what he's like. He will return to you, but not in the way that you might think. Just be ready to accept change," I said, and then raced off to subdue more dragons. Stoick just stood there, shock written on his face clear as day. I had delivered a bit of a ringer hadn't I?

The rest of the raid went by uneventfully, I mean, besides plenty of dragon slaying and scaring off, but you know what I mean. When it was done, the village had lost a whole flock of sheep, several barrels of fish, some goats, and a cart full of cabbage. We had captured a Nightmare, but all of the other dragons were slain.

I met up with Gobber and he explained why the Nightmare had been spared.

"Stoick likes to take out his anger on one poor beast from every raid," he said.

"That's horrible," I said.

"I know, but there's nothing you can do."

"Oh yes there is. It's time everyone knew who I am. Prepare for a show," I said smiling, and slipped off to formulate my plan, although almost all of it was thought out. First I had to hunt down Stoick.

I found him by the Great Hall, sitting on the front steps with his head in his hands, crying quietly. I had never known my father to cry, so I was a little surprised. I sat down next to him, trying to comfort him.

"What's wrong Stoick?" I asked.

"It's always like this after a raid. I don't remember anything that happens, but this time, I have a memory of Hiccup, my son, during the raid, but he's dead or gone. And he is never coming back," he said, breaking off into sobs again.

"Well, sir, there is something that I would like to ask you. I would like your permission to kill the Nightmare. I would like to show you a few skills that I have learned," I said.

"Okay. I am tired anyway. Show us what you've got," he said, weakly hauling himself up the steps.

We walked to the arena, where the majority of the village had already gathered to witness the usual dragon murder. I grimaced. This was all so cruel and horrible, and I was going to set it right.

I walked in and saw the Nightmare chained up in the corner. I took a glance around the arena and clicked my tongue.

"Oh no, this will not do. I need more space to work. Guards, could you bring the Nightmare out into the village square? Thank you," I said, and walked off to the square.

I could almost smell the confusion from the crowd, but Stoick reassured everyone, and the four guards on duty hauled the Nightmare to the village square. The beast had pretty much given up, and wasn't even walking. It just stuck its neck out.

"Here, take me. I'm ready to leave this life," I heard him mutter.

"At ease, I am here to save you, and all dragons," I said.

I saw some confusion cross his face, but I put a finger to my mouth to signal silence. I addressed the crowd instead.

"So! Do you want to see what I can do with a dragon? Do you want to see the pinnacle of all of my studies of these beasts?" I asked, and I got a roar back from the crowd.

"Alright!" I yelled, and shrieked out a call to the wind. Hoping my call would be answered in time, I flung a small egg onto the ground, and it burst open into a plume of inky black smoke, a rather well made smoke bomb, if I do say so myself.

I spread my arms out, and a familiar screech filled the air. There were cries of, "Night Fury!" and many ducked. A black blur swooped into the black cloud and plucked me up, and I just remained in my spread eagle position, safely held in the claws of my best friend.

When he flew out of the ink cloud, I swung myself forward, with a little help from Toothless, and flung myself into the air in front of Toothless, spinning into a back flip and then landing on Toothless's back, clicking my foot into the stirrup.

"Yeehaa!" I yelled out, throwing back my hood and shouting to the wind.

I zoomed over the village, and the crowd all stood with their mouths agape, simply staring and not doing anything else. I landed in the village, still perched on Toothless's back.

"This is what I have learned. This is my greatest achievement, and this is my best friend. So, any questions?" I asked, and everyone's hand went into the air, and several people started shouting at once.

"Oh boy, this is going to be a long day," I said.

## 15. Explanations

### Chapter 15: Explanations

"Who are you son?" I heard someone call out from the back, and everyone else yelled the same question, until it became almost a chant.

"Honestly, I'm surprised that no one recognized me. I am the Inventor, the first dragon rider, the founder of Lorian, and the only son of Chief Stoick the Vast, the one and only Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third," I said with a bit of a bow. What can I say, I've kind of always been theatrical, if you couldn't tell from the numerous dramatic entrances I've made.

There was a collective gasp from the crowd as they started to recognize who stood before them. Stoick's face was one of utter confusion.

"That's not my son. My son never looked like that," he said.

I sighed. He certainly wasn't making this easy. Honestly, had I changed that much? I saw a reflection of myself in one of the villager's helmets, and I realized just how much I had really changed over the year and a half I had been gone. Living with dragons does a lot to you, apparently, not to mention ridding myself of the Wasting Disease.

"Well, a lot's changed. And to prove I am your son, I know that you keep a painting of mother on the right wall of your bedroom, right next to the window. She is wearing her armor, hair pulled back in a braid tied with a blue band, and wearing her helmet, ax raised in a salute," I said.

Stoick gaped. No one had ever been in his room ever, nor knew he had ever commissioned such a painting. That is, except for one Hiccup.

"It is you," he said running to me and squeezing me in a bear hug. I gasped for breath, managing to extricate myself from his massive grip. I had to take a minute to catch my breath after that.

"You've changed a lot," he said, musing over me. "What happened to all of...this?" he asked, gesturing to my whole body.

"You just gestured to all of me," I moaned, which was unfortunately a normal dialogue between us, at least before my departure.

"Well, yeah, The boy I knew before he left was nothing like the man standing before me."

"Yes, well, Wasting Disease does a thing to a kid," I said.

Stoick seemed a little taken aback by that comment. I could hear many hushed whispers running through the crowd, as well as another collective gasp.

"How did you know about that?" he asked, seeming to grow more solemn and serious.

"Gobber told me just the other day. We had a nice chat, didn't we Gobber?" I said, smiling to the blacksmith.

"Ay, and I think I still have a bit of airsickness," he said. "Flying did not bode well with my stomach."

Stoick looked incredulously at Gobber, as did most of the village. He just shrugged.

"What, the kid enticed me to do it. It was pretty spectacular too, although I'm just not used to it," he said.

"Just airsickness. Happens to everyone the first time. Well, at least, everyone but me," I said grinning. "Anyway, Toothless was able to rid me of Wasting Disease. You would not believe how powerful dragon saliva is for healing. I nearly cracked my head open, he licked it, and it was healed within the hour," I said. "It's powerful stuff."

"Wow, it's just that, you go away for a year and a half, and then all of a sudden you've become...this," and he gestured to all of me, which made me roll my eyes. "It's just a little much."

I snorted. "You think this is something, you should check out Lorian. We found a nice volcanic island a little ways from here, not far by dragon. The place is warm, and full of resources. The Timberjack was a big help, too. The place has massive gold, silver, and iron deposits on the surface, and the land is really fertile," I said.

"And what did you do with it?" asked Gobber.

"Well, we built a town. We constructed Lorian, the world of lore. The town has everything, a forge, food storage, houses for everyone, we even built a small library and I started penning all of my knowledge on dragons there."

"And you built all of it?" asked Stoick.

"Well, I had help. The dragons of course, but also the other teens, who should be around here somewhere..." I said, glancing around. I noticed them coming up from behind me. I spun around to greet them.

"Ah, nice of you to join the party," I said.

"So much for lying low," muttered Astrid.

"Plans change," I shrugged.

"Your plans always change."

"Detail, details," I said.

"Well, I must say that it warms my heart to see all of you again," said Stoick.

"And to you, good sir. It seems our vacation is at its end," said Fishlegs, who, for some unknown reason, was feeling rather poetic today.

I was about to speak again when Forge flew in above everyone's head and landed on my shoulder, eying the villagers warily.

\_Stand down Forge. They're not a threat\_, I said, and Forge lost his edge, and cuddled up on my shoulder and around my neck. I scratched him under the chin in gratitude. Forge could have the tendency to be stubborn sometimes, which was a little annoying, but I was the same way, so we understood each other.

I looked up to see the stares of everyone in the village. The teens saw it and start laughing hysterically.

"You should see your faces!" said Ruffnut tears of mirth rolling down her cheeks.

"Oh that's just too funny," gasped out Snotlout between laughing fits.

I smiled and addressed the crowd. "Well, it seems you have seen the next trick I have up my sleeve. It appears that dragons are more intelligent than you once thought. A lot more intelligent, actually. They have their own language and customs, which I have taken the liberty to get to know, and then taught the teens. There's not really a way to write it, it's more spoken, but the again, dragons don't write books, now do they?"

It seems that this was met with a lot of skepticism, as many people started shouting at me simultaneously.

"Yes I know it sounds ridiculous, but let me prove it to you. Let's see, Mulch, could you come here please?" I asked. "Now Mulch, I want you to think of a number and a letter. Don't tell me, but signal the answer to the crowd. Then tell it to Forge over by that tree, so I can't hear it. Forge will then tell me what you said," I said, and Mulch did as I asked, although he was a bit apprehensive around Forge.

When Forge returned he told me the answer.

\_He said 1A. It seems his counting skills and reading are a little lacking\_, snorted Forge.

\_You don't know how right you are.\_

"Forge tells me that the number you chose was one and the letter was A. He also doubts your mental capacity, just so you know. Dragons are more forthcoming with insults, it seems," I said.

The crowd was amazed, and almost all of them believed me. There was one stubborn person, and I knew from the onset that he would be my major obstacle.

Mildew made his way to the front and raised his staff in protest.

"You really believe this boy? These beasts are enemies, vile demons not fit to walk this earth, and the only way to live in peace is to destroy them," he said, prodding me with the stick. "Why, I don't doubt that the boy is possessed by Loki himself," he accused.

"Now, now Mildew. Let's not be harsh. You of all people should know that I'm still the same person as ever. Or have the constant summers weeding your cabbage patch not been enough to let you know a little bit about me?" I said.

Mildew just opened his mouth to speak, but no sound came out. He was at a loss for words.

"To prove my trust in these beasts, we'll do a simple exercise," I said, and then proceeded to run and dive headfirst off the cliff. Toothless raced forward and caught my fall, and we soared upward, high up into the clouds. When we got to the height of our climb, I dove off, plummeting headfirst to the earth.

The feeling of falling was almost as exhilarating as flying, a sense of freedom from everything as we fell from Asgard to Midgard. Toothless grinned back at me from his spot next to me on our fall, poking me on the shoulder and making me spin. I grinned back and did a few tricks, flipping over and over again, pulling different poses. When we almost hit the trees, I spun back to Toothless, and we clicked together and soared back up and toward the village.

The adrenaline pumping through me was awesome, and I grinned like a child on Snoggletog. The crowd just gaped, and I heard some scattered applause as I took a bow. I loved pulling stunts like that.

"The nerve. I'm amazed you even let yourself near that beast, let alone ride it and trust it. They're bred killers, and there's no changing that," said Mildew.

I just sighed. "How many times do I have to show you, Mildew. You can trust them. As long as you don't provoke them, they won't harm you," I said, placing my hand inside Toothless mouth. "See? Nothing to be afraid of."

This was the perfect time to bring up the topic of why I had come back to this gods forsaken island.

"Well, there is something to fear, something I have learned only recently. Their nest is run by an evil dragon, bigger than anything ever seen before. She is the size of a mountain, capable of eating a Nightmare whole without so much as a second thought. It controls them, forcing the dragons to bring it food. That's why they raid you," I said.

The villagers exploded. Some were furious, some were intrigued, and, in Mildew's case, outraged.

"You've been to the nest?" asked Stoick.

"Indeed I have, and let me tell you, the queen is nothing that you can take down. She is more powerful than all of your forces will ever be. Which is why I came back. I need your help. The only way to end this stupid war is to fight that dragon and kill it. Then humans and dragons can live in peace and harmony. It certainly worked for Lorian, and I think it can work for here. So what do you say, are you with me?" I asked.

## 16. In Which Hiccup Loses His Cool

### Chapter 16: In Which Hiccup Loses His Cool

Quite to my dismay, I was met with a large number of blank stares from the village. I was almost getting used to these blank stares. They happened enough recently to temper me to them, but they were still unnerving.

"Um, hello! Anybody home? I just delivered the single most revealing and controversial statement in all Viking history, and you guys have nothing to say? I'm ashamed!" I said.

All at once the plaza exploded with shouts.

"And...that's more like it," I said, sighing. Why do I even bother.

"How does this even make sense? How could a dragon ever get that big?" asked Spitelout, Stoic's second in command.

"Because the other dragons feed it. It controls them, I'm not quite sure how. Probably with hypnosis, I'm guessing?" I said, phrasing the question to Toothless.

\_A fairly close estimate. The Red Death uses a call that possesses dragons to do her bidding through forceful entry into a dragon's mind. Think of it as the Red Death controlling them remotely, like machines. It's quite cruel. But being bonded with a human is able to help block the mind from such attacks,\_ said Toothless.

I relayed Toothless's message to the village, and they were none to pleased about it. Especially Mildew.

"You expect us to believe \_you\_, boy? You're talking about something that's a mere legend, a figment of your imagination," said Mildew.

"How could I imagine something like that? The thing was the size of a mountain. I mean, it's kind of hard to just hallucinate that."

"Yes, but how do we know this isn't just some ploy to lead us all to our deaths," he said, raising his staff high in protest.

At that I just laughed. "If I wanted you all dead, Mildew, I would have done so. With fairly little resistance, I might add. Your defenses are weak against such an attack. Plus, I have this," I said, pulling out Thor II and firing a bolt at a tree.

"This is unnatural! Outrageous! Dragons are vile, evil, mindless beasts, whose only purpose isn't to kill, and that's all they'll ever be!" shouted Mildew.

"And that's where you're wrong! They're more than that, or have my theatrics not shown that enough. I can stick my hand in Toothless's mouth without any fear of harm!" I said.

"And how do we know you haven't hypnotized the beast or something!" said Mildew.



I shrugged. "Blind faith, I guess."

"And why should we trust you?"

"Because he's Hiccup! Have you ever known him to lie about anything when he was with you?" asked Astrid.

That much was true. I was known, renowned even for my brutal honesty. I almost never lied, and when I did, I was horrible at it. I thought back to the time I tried to persuade Gobber that I didn't burn his favorite pair of silk undies.

Gobber stormed up to me, a look of fury in his face. I knew I was done for. I continued to work on the dagger I was forging, trying not to look up at the storm on the man's face. \_

"Hiccup," he said, obviously trying to keep his voice calm. "What happened to my favorite pair of undergarments? I seem to remember leaving them drying in my house. I saw you go in, and come out, and suddenly they're gone. Care to explain?" \_

I gulped, trying to ignore the big, angry man and just continue with my work. Unfortunately, my ruse was not successful, as two seconds later, Gobber lifted me up with his hook arm and placed me in front of him. \_

"Don't ignore me boy, I know you know something."\_

"Me? That's...that's ridiculous Gobber. How would I know anything?" I said, trying to maintain an easy and innocent posture, which is not easy when an angry guy with only two limbs is glaring down at you with a piece of your shirt attached to his hook. \_

"I saw you go in there, don't deny it. Tell me," he said. \_

I gulped again, and stole a nervous glance into the forge area. Gobber looked the same way and paled, and then the blood returned and he looked extremely aggravated.\_

What he had seen were his favorite pair of bright purple silk underpants laying greasy, burnt, torn and wrapped around a sharp sword near the forge. He looked to me again and said, "You didn't..."\_

"I...have no idea what you're talking about."\_

"Oh come on Hiccup. The ruse is up."\_

Another nice attribute of mine is my unwilling stubbornness. A nice gift I get from my father (woohoo). \_

"I don't know how those got there Gobber. Someone must have planted it."\_

Gobber raised his hook and started to say, "Well, let's see, there's about 30 swords to sharpen, four axes to make..."\_

"Okay, okay! No more! I did it! I took them, but I only thought they were a loose rag, I swear! I just needed one for my work, and there were none in the shop. You always had spare stuff in your

house, so I just grabbed the first one I saw. I had no idea they were your underpants, I swear!" I said, knowing I was pleading for a relief of an amount of work that would take about a year of my life.

\_

\_ Gobber just started laughing uproariously, and I sat in stunned silence. \_

\_ "You're...you're not...upset?" I asked, and as soon as I said it, I reached for the words to stuff them back down my throat.\_

\_ "How could I with that look on your face. You looked like you had seen Ragnarok come early! Hahaha! Oh, that was too good," said Gobber. \_

\_ "You really love to play with me, don't you Gobber?" I said. \_

\_ He shrugged. "You are my best and only apprentice. Got to have a little fun with you. But next time, look before you grab. And don't take my stuff!"\_

\_ "You got it!" I said, trying to run off before he figured out the other half of my lie.\_

\_ "Wait a moment" said Gobber, grabbing me by the shirt again, tearing another hole in it. \_

\_ "You know, I'm going to need a new tunic at this rate."\_

\_ "Regardless. How did you get into my house. I locked it when I left, there are no windows, and I have the only key. Fess up," he said. \_

\_ All I needed to do was lift up a length of thin wire and small metal rod, and Gobber just nodded. \_

\_ "You really are getting good at that lock picking stuff. But leave my stuff alone!" \_

\_ "Will do, Gobber!" I said, running off to my next project, relieved I wasn't punished for it. \_

I was snapped out of my reverie by Mildew's shouts.

"These beasts and their riders should be banished from the island!" The crowd cheered, obviously still not comfortable with the dragons. "They're not fit to live with civilized men! They're beasts, they're cruel, and they...agh!" said Mildew right before a knife thudded into the pole behind him right above his head.

I held up another, a dark gleam in my eye. "Next time you won't be so lucky," I said, trying to keep my cool.

"See! These beasts have made this boy evil. He attacked me!"

>"Alright! That's enough!" said Gobber. "Get out of here before you get hurt, old man. Hiccup seems to past negotiations, and if experience serves me well, you shouldn't mess with him and his dragons."<p>

Mildew stalked off, muttering under his breath. I watched him retreat back to his house with his trusty lamb Fungus.

Stoick was still sitting off to the side, and apparently he had missed the conversation, because he seemed very lost in thought. His eyes were unfocused, and he kept staring out into the ocean.

I whistled and waved my hand in front of his face, and he seemed to snap out of it. From his seated position, he whispered to me, "You've really been to the nest?"

"Yeah, dad. It's unlike anything you've ever seen before. Not even the whole Archipelago alone could take the thing on," I said.

"How?"

"Well, I didn't. Toothless did, only a dragon can find the nest."

I saw his face give an expression that I knew would lead to nothing good, an firm and resolved expression that meant he was going to do something stupid and wouldn't listen to me.

"So, you're saying that if we get a dragon, we can find our way to the nest? We can get rid of these monsters forever? Never live in fear again? Man the ships! We have a mission men!" he said, getting his war face on and stalking to the docks. "And bring a dragon from the arena!"

"Dad! You have no chance! It's like nothing you've ever seen! This thing is bigger than all of Berk!" I yelled in vain.

"Silence Hiccup. I am your superior here, I am more knowledgeable about these matters, so leave the decisions to me," he said.

"How much do you know about dragons? In that realm, I beat you dad."

He waved it aside. "That means nothing."

"It means everything! I promise me, you can't win this thing! It'll kill you!"

"Then I go out with honor! Ready the ships!" he yelled again.

"Listen to me!"

"No!-Make sure to grab enough food!-Hiccup, go home! I have a monster to defeat.

Stoick made to stalk off again. He passed by a torch pole, and heard a rather heavy thud. He looked over to see me sword embedded in the pole about an inch away from his face, slicing several hairs on his beard.

He tried to tug the sword out, but was unable to. I had buried the thing in the wood about a quarter of its length, using its spinning force to amplify the force of impact.

"Listen to me! For once in your miserable, wretched life, listen to me!" I yelled, yanking the sword out with one tug. It seemed that the apprentice had surpassed the master in the respect. I pressed the sword to his throat, pinning him to the pillar.

"I swear, the only reason I aimed for your beard and not your head right now is because you're my father, and that tie is quickly trickling away. Right now, I don't care who you think you are, or your rank, you will listen to me, as your son, and as an adviser. Or I swear, on all the gods in Asgard, that I will kill you right here and now. So, do we have a deal?" I said, pulling away and offering my hand.

Stoick shakily stood taller, shaking my hand and giving me an odd look.

"You've changed. You're not the Hiccup I once knew."

"A lot's happened since then. But then again, I am still the Inventor," I said, with a little evil grin.

"So, do you have a plan?" asked Stoick.

"I do, and I'll tell you in a minute, but first I need to reconcile with Mildew. I don't need him spreading unrest," I said.

I walked over to his house, which was, surprisingly, empty.

"Mildew! Where are you! I've come to apologize!" I yelled, but he was nowhere to be seen.

I looked around his house, and not even Fungus was there. It looked like most of his things were gone, and the only thing left was his bed, and even that was stripped bare. The rowboat that he used for fishing was also gone.

"Where did you go, Mildew?" I asked myself, rubbing my chin thoughtfully.

**\*\*Hey guys! Sorry for the long wait, but with finals and all I barely have any time to write. I really felt like Hiccup needed to relieve his anger, since he's just...too pacifistic for my tastes at times. Plus, the guys got reason to. Also, a gold star to whoever can guess where Mildew ran off to. It may be blatantly obvious, or it may not, I don't know. But then again I'm biased. Don't forget to review!\*\***

## 17. A Plan and the Mother of All Storms

### Chapter 17: A Plan and the Mother of All Storms

I sauntered around the village with Toothless, breathing in the summer air that was surprisingly warm. In Berk, the temperature rarely ever rose above goosebumps level, even in summer, so to have a hot day on Berk was a blessing.

Of course, I had my share of warm days on Lorian. Being so close to the volcano, it was almost always warm, except for devastating winter, which got really cold, but we had been prepared.

Once I was done with my walk, I approached the Great Hall, where Stoick, Spitelout, and Gobber had begun to talk of strategy. Of course, they had no idea what they were talking about, but their many strategies held little water.

"We could try to swarm the beast. Overwhelm it with numbers," said Stoick, demonstrating his idea with his hands.

"No, no, no. We should try to scare it off. I say we get everyone to make a whole lot of noise and flashing lights, and the dragon will be scared witless," said Gobber, clanging his mug on the table.

"Like your charming Viking demeanor wouldn't do that already," I muttered to myself, but the idea kept flowing.

"Maybe we could try flooding it out. We could build a huge aqueduct and fill it with seawater," suggested Spitelout.

"Alright! I'm sorry to say that I cannot stand another moment of your pitiful strategies, so allow me to tell you my plan," I said.

"Well, Vikings such as us don't really need strategy," said Spitelout.

I waved the comment aside. "Yeah, yeah. Bash it with a hammer and scare it off. That strategy never works, only against dimwits like yourself."

Spitelout drew his sword and pointed it at my throat. "Respect your elders, \_boy.\_"

I smiled, and then dropped to the floor, kicking out my right leg. It caught Spitelout of balance, making him drop to the floor. I grabbed his sword, which had fallen from his hand, and pointed it at him mockingly.

"I will when they give me reason to. All you ever do is fight. I showed you peace once and you rejected it. I was the \_embarrassment\_ of the village, but I created more useful things you used than I can count. Who made the majority of your weapons, designed them, carefully calculated and measured them specifically to fit the user? Me. Did I ever get a shred of respect or recognition? None! Why should I ever give you respect, you who have done nothing but fight amongst yourselves?!" What would you do if you were in my shoes?" I said, flipping the sword and handing it to him.

He shakily stood to his feet and grabbed his sword, looking fully embarrassed. Then again, he had good reason. A child, the former disappointment of the Viking world, had just gotten the better of him. It made me feel very satisfied.

I clapped my hands. "Now that that is out of the way, let's get on to strategy," I said.

Stoick looked very bewildered for a second before answering. "Right. Of course. Tell us what you know about this...thing."

I rubbed my chin the way I always do when thinking. "Where to start? Alright, so this thing, from what I could gleam from Toothless and

the other dragons, is about as big as a mountain. It sleeps most of the time, and is extremely lazy, but it does have a remarkable power to control the mind of any dragon with its mating call. It employs them to bring it food, which the dragons do most efficiently by raiding Viking villages. As far as I know, the only way to remove the queen's influence on a dragon is to bond with it to a human. I'm thinking that the combined force of two minds and the ability of humans to be impervious to the queen's call." I frowned for a second. "You know, calling her the queen is getting annoying. I'm just going to call her the Red Death."

Stoick sat at the table looking like he was deep in thought. Spitelout looked like he didn't care, and Gobber looked plain confused.

"Say it again?" he asked.

I sighed. Gobber was brilliant in his own right, but in other areas, like language for instance, he needed a little help.

"The Red Death attracts dragons with a mating call. The only way to stop its influence is to bond a dragon with a human, who is unaffected by the call. It uses its power to gather food for itself, and is extremely large," I explained.

After several more moments of being lost in thought, Stoick spoke up again.

"So what is your idea?"

I poked the table, stabbing at the spot on the map where I had marked (where I thought at least) where the nest lay.

"I say we assemble a team of dragon riders to attack the nest and bring down the Red Death. We would need maybe a dozen or so riders all told, and I already have six including me. I'll need volunteers to become riders, as well as dragons. I would like your permission to take over the killing arena as a dragons training arena," I said.

He seemed to think for a while. "Permission granted, although good luck finding any volunteers."

I smirked at that. "Leave that up to me. I happen to know a guy."

"Well, if that is all, then I believe we all have somewhere better to be," said Spitelout, who seemed to be suffering withdrawal from not stabbing something for more than four hours in a row (I'll never understand that man, which explains a lot about his son).

I walked out of the Great Hall and headed to the market center of the village. I walked into the center and breathed in the scent of the marker, the metal from the jeweler and blacksmith shop, and fresh baked rolls from the bakery.

It was the bakery I was most interested in. I used to frequent the bakery, as it was known that I had a very strong sweet tooth, and was rather partial to the bakery's cinnamon rolls. Although cinnamon was hard to come across, the bakery usually stocked up when Johann came to town, so they were never really low.

I happened to have a fairly good relationship with the baker's son, Aaron, who was only a year older than me, and with a substantial list of friends. He was the most connected person I had any kind of relationship with, so he was my ticket to getting rider volunteers.

I stepped into the bakery and drew out a sack of gold coins, intent on getting his attention by buying one of his award winning cinnamon rolls. I was called up to the counter, and I placed my order with Aaron, who didn't even come close to recognizing me.

I got my roll and thanked him for it. I sat down at one of the many tables that dotted the inside of the rather expansive bakery. It was one of the only buildings in all of Berk that had actually remained since the very beginning, due mostly to the fact the dragons were actually allergic to cinnamon. Who knew? Apparently it puts them in a sneezing fit for weeks, and I know that if I were a dragon, I wouldn't want that either.

I ate my roll in silence, simply staring around the decorative interior, most of the paintings done by Bucket himself, portraying beautiful landscapes as well as the original bakery owners, Pin and Pan, two brothers who built the place when Berk was founded.

Once I finished, I walked back up to the corner, where Aaron greeted me again.

"My compliments," I said winking. "Your rolls truly are legendary here."

Aaron shrugged. "I know how to make them, and don't tell anyone, but me and a friend of mine, Hiccup, used to steal them from the cooling racks by the window."

I smiled. "I remember those days. Such fun times we had."

Aaron looked confused. "How do you..." he trailed off. Evidently, he hadn't seen my performance earlier. Aaron did always put work first. "Hiccup?"

I flourished with my hands. "The one and only. I need your help though. I need you to round up your most loyal, trustworthy, and strong friends and meet me in the dragon ring tomorrow. I've got a little project I need you guys to help me with," I said. If I said straight out that I needed him to help me fight a war against a dragon the size of a mountain, there would be complications.

"Um, sure, I guess. Where did you go?" he asked.

"I'll explain later, but meet me there tomorrow, and I'll tell you everything."

>After that, I made my way to the ship, where I was met by massive waves crashing against the docks, wrecking havoc everywhere. Boats were being smashed and shattered against the rocks, and I feared for the Dragon's Head.<p>

I whistled for Toothless, and he flew over instantly from wherever he was. We took off for the boat. I hooked him up to the ship's restraining lines, and we lifted the ship from the waves and

deposited it in one of the dry dock spots.

I patted the hull. "Should be safe there, huh bud?"

Toothless only nodded before looking out into the ocean again, growling.

\_Storm's coming. A massive one too. We need to get everyone inside,\_ he said.

I looked out where he was looking and I could see the wall of snow and frozen rain blasting its way towards us. I ran to the nearest watchtower and sounded the storm drum. Everyone stopped where they were and grabbed their friends and children, and ran for the Great Hall.

Toothless and I only just made it to the Great Hall before the storm hit. We closed the doors, but we could see the sideways snow and sleet pouring down from the heavens, destroying everything in its path. I could see houses being ripped apart, some even being washed off and into the ocean.

This might put a bit of a damper on my plans.

## 18. Four Plans Destined to Collide

### Chapter 18: Four Plans Destined to Collide

**\*\*I apologize for the lateness of this update. I was on vacation for a week and since then I've been busy with football practice, so that's that. Also, this chapter is written in first person for the first part and then in third person for the other three. But now, back to your regularly scheduled programming.\*\***

Everyone was assembled in the Great Hall, packed in like sardines in a barrel. Of course, the dragons didn't make it any better. Luckily they were able to roost in the rafters, or else we would have had a full scale crisis on our hands.

A lot of people objected to the dragons bunking with us in the Hall, but I managed to persuade them that the dragons needed to be protected from the storm as well. The grumpiest and most stubborn of them simply holed themselves in the corner and refused to look up. I shrugged. Not my problem.

I managed to clear off a table and summoned Stoick, Spitelout, Gobber, and Fishlegs. We needed to make a plan, and Fishlegs was the town map maker (as a side hobby).

"So, from what I can assume from these maps, the Nest is here," I said, pointing out a spot just north of Helheim's Gate.

"We were looking for it in the wrong place," said Stoick.

"No, you had it right. The waters there are unnavigable, as the map shows. Unfortunately, what I have dubbed as the Labyrinth, the maze of rocks inside of Helheim's gate, is almost impossible to navigate. But that doesn't make a difference, because we have dragons, so we'll just fly," I pointed out.



"How many riders do you need?" asked Spitelout.

"As many as we can get, which right now is about seven but I still have to speak to Aaron. What I need, though, is a way to bring it down. You guys are the very best at killing dragons, and Fishlegs has all the info available, so I was wondering how we would take down a monster the size of a mountain," I posed.

All I got was stares.

"So it's up to me then?" I asked.

"No no. Sorry, just still trying to get used to this," said Gobber, and the others made similar excuses.

"We could try blowing up the volcano that she's in. We'd have the firepower to do it," said Fishlegs.

"Dragon hide is fireproof."

"Not blast proof."

"We'd need a huge blast, which we can't build."

"Quiet!" I yelled. "We'll keep that idea as a backup. There is a curious phenomenon that we have observed that may help us. A dragon is not fireproof on the inside," I said.

Stoick raised his eyebrow. "Than how do they breathe fire without burning themselves?"

"Because they don't breathe fire. They breathe a gas which is then ignited externally, usually by a special tooth in the back of the mouth that acts as a flint. Their mouth is fire proof, but their throat and stomach are not. If we time it just right, with enough dragons, we could muster the firepower to explode the monster," I said.

"Than why the need for so many dragons?" asked Gobber.

"Well, we'll need to keep it distracted. It's not just going to open it's mouth for us and say. "Hey, kill me.""

"True, plus the added riders would be good to have should we have future problems with other tribes," said Stoick.

I nodded. They were taking my plan well. Hopefully we could reap this little fiasco up and done in just a few days.

"Of course the only problem is this storm..." said Stoick, just as a massive gust blew the front door open. A handful of Vikings rushed to close the huge doors, their large muscles bulging from the strain of forcing the doors closed against the wind. The snow from the gust was scattered all over the floor, and several people had been almost buried. Such was the ferocity of the storm that only a few seconds of opening the door had several Vikings up to their necks.

"We'll just have to sit it out then," said Gobber.

I nodded slowly. "And now we wait."

Meanwhile, on Outcast Island, Mildew sat next to a fire with a thick blanket tucked around him. He was sipping on a hot mug of ale. He had been fished out of his excuse of boat in the middle of the ocean by an Outcast ship, and they had made land just before the storm hit.

Mildew quickly found that him and Alvin, the leader of the Outcasts, had a lot in common. They both hated dragons with a vengeance, and had a deep grudge against the people of Berk. And Mildew had plenty of information that was valuable to Alvin.

Alvin was incredibly fascinated in Hiccup for some reason, Mildew had no idea why. The boy was a stupid oaf, trusting those mindless beasts. The beast had somehow bewitched him or some dark power was at work, because no beast such as a dragon should ever be able to tamed. Mildew loathed him with a passion.

When he had run away, he had no idea where on Midgard he was going to, but all he wanted to do was get away from Berk. He was thinking that maybe he could employ the Berserkers, as they were closer, but he was lucky that he was intercepted by the Outcast ship, or he never would have survived. An old man can only bail out a boat for so long before he faints.

Alvin had come up with a plan to invade Berk when the storm let up, and he was preparing all of their anti-dragon weaponry. Catapults, spears, slings, all kinds of long range weaponry were already being prepared, and although Alvin was no genius (he was barely literate) he had come up with a battle plan that was sound.

Of course, Alvin was very familiar with the layout of Berk. He was an Outcast from there after all. He knew its strengths and weaknesses, although the dragons were a new element. But Alvin was confident that his plan would succeed.

Meanwhile, a small Terror was flying from Berk to the Nest. Being a small dragon, he was able to fly through the storm rather unhindered, although that is not to say he wasn't battered by the storm. He was a spy for what the dragons called the Queen. He landed in the main chamber and mustered his biggest voice possible, which was hard for the dragon because he was so incandescently small.

"The night fury has been spotted on the island known as Berk, your highness. Him and his rider and friends have created a plot to come here and destroy you," he said in his squeaky voice.

Now the little rodent didn't really want to report this to the queen. He would rather she was dead and he a free dragon to feast on his own catch of fish, but sadly the queen's mind control talents were superior and his brain was very much under her control.

"Interesting. We'll send out our finest warriors when this storm clears. Berk and those pesky riders who think they can thwart me will find the full extent of my wrath!" yelled the queen.

Every single dragon in the vast chamber cringed. This meant a full scale attack, the likes of which happened since the Vikings had first

come to this land, but the stubborn humans had triumphed and survived. The coming battle the queen was proposing would cost many a dragon life, and no one truly wanted to serve the queen to that extent.

Of course, there were exceptions to this rule. The queen had one right hand dragon, a Skrill, who would go to the end of the earth to serve the queen. He was the general of her army, and was the one who organized the raids on the Viking villages. He would be leading this battle, or so the queen said, but the queen would be remaining at the nest.

Due to her gargantuan size, the queen was not easily mobile, and therefore simply had her lackeys do all of the work for her. One thing they knew though, was that assignment would be one of the toughest in dragon history, and every dragon began to loathe the queen with a new passion.

Meanwhile, in the war council room of the Senate in the great city of Rome, General Fabius Maximus was leading a council for the expansion of the Empire. The population had become too crowded, and Caesar wanted more power.

Personally, Fabius was a little tired of this same old routine, but he did enjoy a good battle, and this gave him an opportunity. The council was currently looking over maps of possible lands open for expansion.

"We could extend more into the African lands," proposed a Centurion.

"We don't need the resources. We have enough land there. What about these island chains over here. It's farther north than we've ever expanded, and the lands could contain resources that could be useful for the Empire," said Fabius.

"I agree. It is a bit of a trek, but I think the exploration will be well worth it. I must warn you though, from the reports, the people there are violent and unsteady. It may take more force than usual to take it, so take four legions. That should be more than enough to seize the entire Archipelago," said Caesar, closing the meeting.

"Well, that was fast," remarked the Centurion to me after.

"Yeah well, you tell Caesar what he wants to hear, and you get what you want. I haven't seen a good fight in too long," said Fabius wistfully.

"I hear you. Shall I send the order to get the ships ready?" asked the Centurion.

"Of course. Now go, I must prepare," said Fabius, stalking away to his home.

Fabius was no poor boy of the city, as a General he had a good standing in the city and his pay was significantly more than the average soldier, so his home was rather luxurious. He owned several personal slaves, and a lived a rather rich lifestyle.

Fabius crashed in his bedroom, collapsing on his bed in exhaustion. He trained every day for four hours personally, to keep on top of his game, but he also trained for an hour with his troops to keep up their teamwork. After that and the war council, he was completely spent. He just needed time to cool down.

Honestly though, he wasn't really sure how to feel about the new expedition. Caesar had almost been too eager to agree to his idea. Was he trying to get rid of him? Was he a threat?

If he was, than Fabius wanted more. If Caesar wanted him gone so easily, he wouldn't go down without a fight. If he captured the Archipelago, he may even have a massive force on his hands to take over the Empire.

He fell asleep dreaming of what it must be like in Caesar's house.

## 19. The Gauntlet Begins

**\*\*I am so, so, so, so, so, so, so sorry to all of my very loyal followers for leaving you after I left you with such a cliffhanger ending. I had lost interest in this story, mainly because I couldn't work out how to end it, but I'm back on track with a plan for an ending and an awesome sequel. Hang in with me, I promise to continue with this story.\*\***

### The Gauntlet Begins

Being cooped up in the Great Hall was no picnic, especially with the combined stench of sweaty men, dragons, and wood smoke permeating the air so thickly you could almost taste. It was not helped by the fact that everyone had about a square foot of space, so, obviously, it was hard to even begin training our new riders. That and the fact that we only had our dragons.

Since I had nothing better to do, I gathered up Aaron and a few other volunteers and began the process of speaking Dragonese. See, the gang and I had lots of time to bond with our dragons and become tuned to their motions so that you could read their mind with a single glance, whereas the trainees would have a few days, maybe a few weeks if we're lucky. I mean, we have all the time in the world, right?

All five of them gathered around Toothless and I, since Toothless was our best linguist as well as the smartest dragon we had. The group included Aaron, Spike, a girl with a nasty mouth and a wicked ax, her brother Slash, who was incredibly strong but very humble about it, Coal, a small guy who packed a wicked punch and also had a good eye for all things mechanical, which I liked, Starlett, who was very vain and always worrying about her hair, and would also put a knife through your side before you could blink if you insulted it from 200 paces, and Axel, a dock worker with a good set of muscles but was most known for his speed, and legend had it he could outrun a Nightmare. Wish I had that a few years ago. It could have saved me from this whole mess.

I started off by telling them the basics of the language, its different sounds and its basic structure and had them practice. It was actually quite hilarious because some of what they were saying

could be interpreted as phrases that were altogether hilarious, what with their pronunciation and limited vocabulary. Some of them were so funny it took about five minutes for us to get over it.

After several days of Dragonese, the storm finally cleared and we were able to get back outside. Our first order of business was to find dragons, which, luckily, was rather easy, because Berk held more nooks and crevices than any island in the Barbaric Archipelago, and dragons loved to take shelter in the caves.

Of course, Toothless and I, as well as the rest of the gang, could have flown, but we wanted to stay with our trainees. After all, they were going to be joining us, and we needed to connect with each other. There was no way we could take down the Red Death without a full team effort.

As we walked, the new trainees were very curious about our time away at Lorien. Apparently legends about us had spread since our arrival.

"Actually, there's been legends about the Riders of Lorien from even before you arrived," said Axel.

"From who?" asked Astrid.

"Johann. Other Sailors mostly. I heard most of them working at the docks. The Riders saved many sailors from other tribes, and even from a few wrecks. Was that you?" Axel asked.

I smiled. "Yeah. Inadvertently. Most of the time we were just looking for fish and ended up with pirates. It was also a kind of boredom buster, but I must say, pirates are stupid. Like really stupid," I said.

"Do you remember that one who tried to use his sword as a raft to survive a wreck?" said Snotlout.

"Thick as I can remember. There was one who tried to shoot us with his crossbow while using it to hold himself above a sharkworm infested sea, which then shot him in the hand and he fell. Ah, the memories," said Astrid.

"Sharkworms?" asked Slash.

"Yeah. Named them myself. They're vicious beasts, much like the sharks that plague the waters to the south, but these can climb on land and on ships, and do not discriminate on what they eat. If you see one, run," I said, slashing through the underbrush as we went.

Fishlegs approached me as we walked. "Um, Hiccup, couldn't we just fly everyone up? It would be a lot faster, and we have enough dragons."

I just smiled. "Gauntlet," was all I said, and Fishlegs smiled in recognition before melting back into the group.

The Gauntlet was a network of tunnels that ran under the mountain, most of the times packed with dragons as well as deadly lava pools, fragile ceilings, deep drops, and, of course, ferocious dragons. Lots

of boulder class and stoker class dragons liked to hang out at the base of Thor Mountain, with the sharp class taking residence a little ways higher, at the perfect spot that their scales could reflect the sun, giving the mountain a mesmerizing look at sunset. Mystery class dragons liked the woods at the foot of the mountain, Fear class somewhere in the middle of the mountain's height, and then the strike class dragons at the very top. It acted as a symbol of the hierarchy of dragons that existed everywhere, an unwritten code among dragons as to dominance. Strike, the thinkers, Fear, the warriors, Sharp, designers and the equivalent to archers, Stoker and Boulder, the brutes who shared some intelligence with the Strike class, and then Mystery dragons, the outliers of the dragon community who did not fit a specific clique.

As we approached the foot of the mountain, I could hear the telltale sounds of dragons that were inspecting us, trying to tell who we were and if we were a threat. It was mostly Changewings, the predominant Mystery class dragons in the heart of Berk, and they were curious. They could smell the metallic scent of the iron in our weapons, which only raised their suspicions. The only difference was that my sword was infused iron, iron infused with dragon fire, making it nearly indestructible, the ingot formed in a Gronkle's cauldron, molded with the heat of a Night Fury's plasma, and imbued with the paralyzing poison of the Nadder. These were familiar smells that did not excite the Changewings, but the other weapons were not so special. At least, none that we had forged. I had made all of the other weapons for our group with this method, but classic weapons still gave off the tell-tale scent of fear.

The Changewings muttered to themselves as they observed, which caught my acute hearing.

\_Humans.\_

\_ Dragon iron.\_

\_ Warriors.\_

\_ Friend of foe?\_

Obviously not the brightest of the bunch, but they were smart enough. As the last one asked the question, friend of foe, Spike answered from the back in imperfect dragonese, "Friend."

The Changewings instantly went silent, and I watched as one materialized right next to her, eyeballing her with those mesmerizing eyes.

\_You speak the dragon tongue and yet are not dragon. How?\_

Spike swallowed, and summoned up all of her courage to mutter one word, a word that I had taught all of them.

\_Dragonfriend.\_

She extended her hand, and the Changewing seemed confused for a second, backing off slightly, before realizing the gesture, and pressing his face against her palm, and I could almost see the connection form between them right there. Spike's eyes sparkled, and the Changewing looked extremely happy, with a light of freedom in his

eyes that I recognized from the very first time I stared into a dragon's eyes, and I knew that they were a pair.

"And that, shield maidens and warriors, is how it's done," I said, applauding. Spike blushed.

"Well, one down and four more to go. Come along, the fun's just beginning," I said.

We hiked for another few hours, stopping for a drink and a bite at a sheltered grove. Once we reached the foot of the mountain, I searched for the entrance, and I found it. A secluded, very dark hole in the mountain, which almost seemed to absorb the light around it and emit only a pure, inky blackness through which nothing could be seen. I had Toothless light a few torches, faced the group, and smirked again.

"Shield maidens and warriors, welcome to the Gauntlet. No more turning back." And then we plunged into inky artificial night.

## 20. Chapter 20

### The Gauntlet

And so began what I called training, and what my trainees would refer to ever after as "living hell". I thought it was awesome, but apparently getting electrocuted, nearly taking a swim in lava, getting lifted above the mountain by nano-dragons, and falling to your doom don't exactly fit many people's idea of fun. Ah well, to each his own.

As I was saying, I started them off simple, navigating a maze in the dark using only the light of a few torches. The gang and I knew the way, since we had basically lived in these caves, but the others were not so lucky. The goal was to reach the top of the mountain without dying, which was in and of itself harder than one might imagine.

"Okay guys, everyone is on their own here. There are several ways through this maze, you'll each get a torch, so good luck. If you get lost, just keep going. Toothless can find you if you take too long. A point to note though, watch out for shadows," I said cryptically, winking at all of them, whom I could see sweating despite the cool cave.

"Andâ€¦go!" I yelled, and they all raced off through the maze.

"Follow them," I said. "We don't want them dying prematurely." So we each took a person, and I chose Coal. He had chosen the centermost path, a tricky one, considering where it led to. The mountain held many secrets, and as Vikings, of course we had learned to kill all of them, but it would be a first to see if they could be trained.

Coal was smart about his approach, scanning the tunnel with his light before proceeding, which was especially crucial. Many dragons lurked in the shadows of these caves, but most of them hated light. His senses were pretty acute as well, because he turned around a few times and almost caught Toothless and I in the act of following him.

Luckily, having a darkly colored dragon helped in the camouflage.

Coal approached his first obstacle in the tunnels, a pit of Fireworms with no way around it. Fireworms, a Stoker Class dragon, whose skin could burn hotter than the sun. The pit was full of them, and one touch was enough to give someone third degree burns. The walls around it were slick, melted by the heat and cooled into perfectly smooth rock.

Coal saw the Fireworms and instantly backed away from the intense heat. After a moment, he pulled his tunic over his face to shield it from the heat, although he could still see. He attempted to communicate using his limited Dragonese, which was the basic saying \_dragonfriend.\_

It was a sound plan, except for one small detail. Fireworms, like Terrors and some other small dragons, were fairly stupid, instinctual creatures who could not understand the standard dragon tongue. So all Coal got back from his inquiries were hissing and a small spike in heat. Coal stepped back quickly as the wave of heat washed toward him. I could almost see the gears in his head moving. He was an intelligent guy, and I was sure that he would be able work his way out of the problem.

The passage was clear of any material that he could use to get over the swarm, so he had to use what he had on hand. I saw him look at the torch and see his eyes light up before dying again. He realized the flaw in his plan of attempting to burn his way through the Fireworms, he would burn out his torch and be left in the dark. Apparently he was also smart enough to realize that it needed to be done and there was no other option.

He lowered the torch into the swarm, and the Fireworms started to run from it like it was poisonous. See, Fireworms can create heat on their surface, but not an actual open flame like a Nightmare, although the process is similar. If they get too close to an open flame, they can actually burn, weakening them severely and removing their ability to generate their trademark heat. Something I learned while trying to fight back a horde of them from taking my sandwich. Maybe I'll tell you about some other time.

Regardless, Coal was making good progress through the Fireworms when disaster struck. The torch, having been stuck in the immense heat of the Stoker Class dragons, caught on fire in a roaring blaze. So much so that Coal actually dropped the damn thing into the pile of dragons, where it flamed up rapidly and then died. I was about to have Toothless shoot over and get him out of it, but just then, of course, another something happened. The floor dropped out from under Coal and he disappeared from view.

I silently cursed myself. I had forgotten that was there. There were several weak spots in the floor of the passageway, which I had taken the time to mark, but I was so caught up with watching Coal that I didn't notice it. Also, if I had been using my head, I would have known that was why the Fireworms were there. They had come up beneath the floor, underneath which was a dormant volcano. They liked the heat.

Of course, at that thought, I mentally slapped myself. Volcano,



magma, dead Coal, put two and two together genius! I nudged Toothless forward and we plunge down into the glowing red hole in the inky darkness. We found Coal on a small bit of hardened rock on the edge of the lava pool, and, surprisingly, despite the immense heat, Coal was barely breaking a sweat. I can't say the same, since my outfit was designed for warmth in flight, so I was sweltering.

Anyway, gods above, I need to stay on topic, Coal was fighting off, surprisingly, not a swarm of Fireworms, who had, I guess, drowned in the lava, but a Typhoomerang. He was a vibrant red color, which was a solid contrast to Coal's dark hair and eyes, for which he earned his name. This was obviously the Typhoomerang's turf, and Coal, by the looks of it, had fallen into its area and woken it from its sleep. From the words it was spitting out in rapid dragonese made me want to scrub his mouth out with soap. I was about to intervene before Toothless stopped me.

\_Let them go at it. He's not putting Coal in any real danger. If he wanted him dead, he'd have been burned to a crisp when he woke that dragon,\_ said Toothless, and I realized the truth. So Toothless and I slunk back into the shadows and watched the fight. Coal was attempting to get past the dragon and onto solid ground, but the Typhoomerang was content not to let him by, but did not attack directly.

After several minutes of standoff, Coal decided on a different tactic. He plopped himself right down on his spot and began to hum. The Typhoomerang looked confused, tilting his head to the side, and slowly starting to rock to the rhythm of the simple hum, which sounded vaguely like a Viking lullaby mothers sing to children, but modified to make it sound peppier.

The Typhoomerang became very interested in the song, and it took the edge off of him, and soon he was humming along too, in perfect synchrony no less. After slowly earning his trust, Coal slowly extended his hand to the dragon, all while still humming, and the Typhoomerang obliged to the hand, accepting the friendship of Coal. Soon enough, Coal was on his back and they soared out of the hole and back into the maze.

Two kids with dragons, four more to go. Coal breezed through the rest of the maze easily, and he waited at the end for signs of what to do next. He was greeted with a gust of steam that blew a platform up to the next level, something Fishlegs and I had designed a while back. He and his Typhoomerang stepped up, and they advanced. I took the fast way by taking Thor II and blasting a hole in the ceiling above us, and Toothless flew through.

The next level of the Gauntlet was something of a fun one. This one was a network of blind tunnels, only one of which led to the other end, and the others either opened up again in this cave or dead ended, some with dragons hidden inside. This cave was opened, however, due to the heavy prescence of Nadders, who liked to preen in the sun's heat and glow.

After a few seconds, the rest of the group came up to the next level, and I could almost feel the tension between them, almost as if this was a competition. They seemed surprised to see Coal with the Typhoomerang, as none of the others had gained dragons. They all looked at each other for a few moments, and then they all broke off

into a different tunnel each.

One of the deceiving things about this layout was that the tunnel that actually led through the field was halfway across the cave, and all of the others were dead or dragon nests. This was about to get real interesting real fast.

Spike, with her Changewing, was the first to enter a tunnel, and by the sounds of her shrieks, she must have stumbled across a Terror nest. Next thing I see she's running at full tilt being chased by a gang of hungry looking terrors. Her Changewing held them up, but it didn't save her from the humiliation.

Starlett didn't have much better luck, if anything, her plight was much, much worse. She stumbled into a pit of Nano-dragons, nasty little suckers that form swarms with a hive mind mentality and can be extremely aggressive if disturbed. They swarmed out, lifting poor Starlett out of the hole and racing her towards the opening in the cave, despite the loud protests of the girl they had in their claws.

She tried to get to his dagger, but a group of the Nano-dragons broke off and removed it from his pocket and threw it away, leaving him even more defenseless. She was screaming out all sorts of curses, and I was amazed at her broad vocabulary, She certainly knew her way around a curse, I'll give her that.

The swarm continued lifting her outside the cave and out of sight. I started to get concerned, since I had no idea where she was. Soon, though, I heard a high pitched scream that appeared to be accelerating towards me. I looked up in time to see her falling from several hundred feet up. I tried to reach her, but she was falling too fast. Instead, she happened to land on a sleeping Nadder, and I cringed, knowing what would come next.

Starlett was thrown violently from the back of the dragon along with several spines, and they pinned her to the wall by her shirt. Starlett, seeing that her shirt was now ripped beyond saving, started yelling.

"Damn you dragon! I loved this tunic! I'm going to get you for that one!" she screamed, along with several other things I won't repeat (damn, I should've scrubbed her mouth raw for that talk). She plucked the spines from the wall and began to throw them one by one at the Nadder that was approaching her. She was getting pretty close too, she was a skilled knife thrower, but they never actually hit the dragon, just enough to drive it back.

This dragon didn't like what was going on, but it certainly seemed to understand. It dodged the spines, even shooting a few of them out of the air, but never actually attacking. Apparently it didn't sense a threat, since Starlett wasn't actually trying to hurt the dragon, just scare it. I could sense a level of respect from it as well, probably because of the sheer amount of vanity that Starlett had that made her attack the dragon because of a ripped tunic. Women. I'll never understand them.

Eventually Starlett back the dragon into a corner and ran out of spines. The dragon roared at her, but she stood her ground.

"No! Calm down, you stupid dragon. No one messes with me, you got it. You'd better believe I'm going to make you pay for this. Now leave me alone," she said, and proceeded to march on the other edge of the cave. The Nadder, apparently confused by the situation, as well as, from what Toothless and I could sense, a certain attraction to Starlett, followed her.

Starlett didn't seem to take to this well, screaming at the dragon to go away, but apparently this one wasn't going to take no for an answer. It kept nudging her further and further, trying to get her to accept a friendship with her, as I had finally figured out that it was a girl. She pushed Starlett just a bit too far though, because she stepped out into nothing but air and she plummeted down the mountainside, screaming, for the second time in less than five minutes. That's got to be a record.

The Nadder raced down after her, managing to catch her in no time and even do a beautiful aerial dance in the sunlight before landing again. Starlett hopped off dazed but unharmed, and she even smiled at the dragon.

"Oh, how can I hate you after that? You're something after all, you persistent little sucker. I think I'll call you Sundance after that nice little routine there."

I was happy that she had gotten a dragon, and since I had been distracted, I missed the fact that everyone else had made it through, although from the looks of it, they were a little worse for wear. Coal looked like he had a few burns, Spike had a few scratches, Aaron was limping to the right a little, Axel was missing his eyebrows, and Slash was holding his arm, which looked oddly discolored.

Slash looked tired, and he sat down on a patch of the floor that seemed just a little off color from the rest, and sure enough, it happened to be the wing of a Timberjack. It shrugged him off, and Slash looked weary, but he attempted to befriend it, which the Timberjack begrudgingly agreed to, but it still seemed weary.

Apparently, though, Slash knew his dragons too, because he quickly began to scratch the back of the Timberjack, for which he was immensely grateful and instantly earned his trust.

The next stage of the Gauntlet, which I had made sure to mark with signs, since it didn't seem obvious, was to climb the rock face to get to the next level, except for the ones on dragons, who could fly up. So it was just Aaron and Axel who had to climb, which was lucky, because they were definitely the strongest.

They climbed up quickly, and the ones on dragons flew up even faster, until they were all assembled on top. The fear class dragons liked this spot, although most of them seemed absent today. Maybe because of all the ruckus going on downstairs with Starlett, since Fear Class dragons were known to like destruction but not loud, obnoxious noises or being found. So this part of the test was easy, they simply walked through the platform.

However, the Strike Class dragons were next, and they were not so easily persuaded. The cave where they were was inky black, almost as if the darkness was its own entity hovering inside the cave and

preventing any of the light from entering. They all gathered torches and advanced in, but as soon as they were in, they were lost from view.

This is the part I was afraid of, since I now had no way to track my pupils, but they were doing so well on their own, so I figured I'd let them figure it out. I just thought, I was opting for a very Gobber-esque plan here, wasn't I? Just throwing them against the dragons, although I did teach them. Perhaps it was for the best, I mean, that's how I learned everything from Toothless, so it had to be a good system, right?

\_3\_\_rd\_\_ Person POV\_

Inside the cave was fluid darkness that absorbed all light, and the torches had no effect, only illuminating the end of the torch and nothing else. To say it was frightening was an understatement, and almost all of them, including the dragons, were quivering in anticipation and fear.

Axel was plodding along, and he was a little disappointed that he hadn't found a dragon yet, but he didn't feel a connection to any of the one's he had come across. It just wasn't there, no matter how hard he tried to force it. Ah well, he could always just nab a Nadder on his way down if all else failed. Just as he thought that, his foot stumbled upon something, but he couldn't make out the shape in the darkness.

He could hear it rearing up, and he could just make out an outline, not because it reflected light, but more because it absorbed all of the light around it, so that it was even darker than the inky blackness around it.

\_Who are you, puny human, to trespass on my territory?\_ It asked in a deep, strong Dragonese. The darkness lifted a little, and Axel was able to get a better look at the dragon. It was an inky, pitch black, even up to its eyes, and it moved with the fluid motion of a shadow. It looked something like a snake, long and thin, with four legs and powerful looking black wings tucked against its sides so perfectly that they were almost invisible.

Axel gulped and sputtered out \_Dragonfriend\_ in stuttered Dragonese.

\_Do not insult me in my own tongue, boy, speak, I can understand Norse. Your ability to speak Dragonese is disgraceful, it's not even worth considering it \_the dragon said, and Axel gulped again.

"I-I don't want any trouble. I'm a friend of the dragons, in fact a friend of mine helped to end the war. I'm just amazed at you, why has no one ever seen you before?" Axel said rapidly.

\_I am a dragon known to you as a Shade, and my kind do not like to be found. We are able to absorb light and hide ourselves even in broad daylight shadows, and if all else fails, our venom erases all memories a person may have, leaving them nothing more than a stupid shell. In fact, I'm contemplating giving you a little nick and leaving you be. What do you say?\_

Axel was struggling to get the message, but he understood well

enough. "Look, I'm not here to hurt you. In fact, I think that the world needs to see you in all of your magnificence. Plus, I think you and I would make a good team. Pleaseâ€¦" he said, slowly extending his hand towards the dragon with the power to erase all of his memories forever.

The Shade seemed surprised to see this. \_I accept your invitation, young dragon master, and I look forward to see what the world has in store for me.\_

And with that Axel had a dragon. Also, the Shade, which Axel named Nightshade, lifted the darkness of the cave, and everyone could now see what was inside. What they also saw was that Aaron had gotten a Skrill.

When they got outside, everyone stared in shock of Aaron and Axel, who had just acquired two of the rarest dragons out there, and one that was considered untrainable was following Aaron, however reluctantly, and listening to him.

\_Hiccup POV\_

"Congratulations to you all. You made it through, all with new dragons no less. Spend the next few days getting to know your dragon. I'll prepare saddles for you all, as well as new weapons," I said.

To myself, I muttered, "I'd like to see anyone go against us now."

\*\*Whew! Done! That has to be my longest chapter yet. I can't wait, since this story is about to become much more exciting ;)\*\*

## 21. War Preparations

### War Preparations

After our little stint in the Gauntlet, and with the rest of our team with dragons, we made our way towards the village to get prepared for our attack on the Nest. It wouldn't take much, but we needed a plan of action, and I had no idea, even with our advanced numbers how we would ever be able to defeat the Red Death, and believe me, I was open to ideas.

We sat around in the Great Hall attempting to make plans for the next day, but everything we came up with didn't have any kind of merit to them. They were either too audacious, too ineffective, too costly, or too timely. We had no ideas, and I was starting to get desperate.

"How about we just blow it up?" said Tuffnut, and him and Ruffnut both got wicked smiles on their faces.

I sighed. These two really had not changed.

"Her hide is fireproof, and probably too thick to do any damage with dragon fire," I said.

"Why don't we see what Trader Johann has? Remember that stuff he

brought us last time? What did he call it, gunpowder or something," suggested Fishlegs.

"Is Johann here? I didn't see him when we came in," I asked.

"Yeah, he's been here for at least a week, but he's going to be leaving soon, so if we're going to do anything, we'd better do it soon," said Aaron.

"Alright, Aaron, Coal, and I will go down to the docks and try to see if we can get some gunpowder, the rest of you try to see if you can figure out any other weaknesses that this thing may have. Astrid, I'll put you and Fishlegs ahead of that. Once we get this thing out of its hole, we're going to want to try to actually kill it," I said, and Aaron, Coal, and I set off for the docks.

We managed to get there just as Trader Johann was shipping out, and we were able to coax him to come back into port to discuss one last trade request.

"What can I do for you fellows? I need to get going onto Berserker Island, so please make this quick," Johann said.

"Yes, we're looking for something Fishlegs said you had. Something called gunpowder?" I asked.

He screwed his eyes at me for a second.

"Have we met?"

"Yes, although you may know me better like this," I said, pulling up my head over my face. See, whenever we did dealings with traders or other tribes, we made sure to go incognito, but he recognized my voice.

"Ah yes! The infamous Inventor. What shenanigans are you up to now?" Johann asked.

"You know him?" Coal asked.

"Sure. The Inventor and I had a steady trade business going, and he made himself some fancy coin with all of that iron, gold, and silver he exported. Where do you think most of the wealth has come from for the past year?" said Johann.

"That aside," I said, trying to steer the topic back into the right path, "What do you have in the way of this gunpowder stuff?"

"Ah yes, good old English Gunpowder. Originally invented in the Far-East, although the English have definitely improved it. I've got several barrels of it in my hold. What do you need it for?"

"How big of an explosion would all of the gunpowder you have make?" asked Coal.

"Why, with the amount I've got, you could blow up your entire Great Hall several times over. This is very volatile stuff lads, so if you're planning on using it for a prank, I would suggest against it."

"No, we need it for a different purpose," I said, and I filled him in on all of the details of the Red Death and the dragons.

"Well, that is a great story, and as long as you don't use the gunpowder on anything belonging to someone else, I'll be willing to sell them to you. I assume you have something in trade."

I pulled out a few things of my own making, an ornately crafted gold ring, a necklace fitted with a deep green emerald, and a silver circlet.

Johann inspected the items with an experienced eye and a small magnifying glass.

"Remarkable work, as always Inventor. This should be enough to buy you about, say, twelve barrels of gunpowder. Be careful with the stuff though, it packs a punch, but it should be stable enough to transport. Just make sure you don't let it get wet, or else it's useless."

We unloaded the gunpowder, and it was a remarkable amount of the stuff, we waved farewell, and Johann sailed off.

To test the stuff out, and to just have a little fun, I put a small amount in a mini keg I found on the docks and used an old rag as a fuse. I had experience with primitive explosives, I myself had designed a bomb based on ale (powerful too), but this stuff sounded a lot more powerful. I lit it and ran.

The stuff blew up magnificently in a beautiful fireball, and I could feel the shockwave from where we were sitting behind. Unfortunately, the blast happened to break a few boards of the docks, so there was just a hole where the mini keg had been.

"Man that's some good stuff. Imagine blowing this whole lot," said Aaron.

"It should be about enough to get her mad," I said.

"How big is this Red Death?" asked Coal.

"A little smaller than Berk. This explosion should just piss it off, maybe give us a weak point to strike at," I said.

"Well, it's a start at least."

We left the barrels at the docks under the foreman, Mulch. No sense in hauling them up if we're just going to leave with them again.

We ate one last meal before getting on our dragons and heading off towards the Nest. There was twelve barrels, and twelve of us, so it worked out perfectly. Each with their barrel in hand, er, claw, we set off.

We flew for about 20 minutes in relative silence, everyone quietly contemplating what we were about to do. My mind was racing, trying to figure out a way to kill this damn creation, but no such luck. I was really hoping on this gunpowder to expose a weakness in the Red Death.

No sooner had I thought this when a whole flock of dragons appeared on the horizon. This wasn't abnormal, some dragons tended to travel in packs, but as I looked, there was a very mixed assortment, and they all looked very angry.

Toothless began to get edgy, growling under his breath, but I could feel the vibrations.

\_What is it?\_

\_ These dragons are angry, and they're being controlled. \_

\_ But why go that way? There's nothing in that direction butâ€¦|\_, and then realization dawned on me.

"Berk."

And no sooner had I said that when they were upon us, and they didn't just fly by either. We were set upon by dragons, attacking and clawing at us like we were a target or something

"We can't let them get to Berk!" I yelled to the others. "It's their target!"

I pulled out my sword in my left hand and Thor II in the other and began gunning down the dragons. I had to, they were trying to kill us, but I certainly didn't want to. I aimed mostly for something that would incapacitate but not kill them, like a shot to the leg or side. After fighting for our lives for several minutes, I heard one of the Terrors say,

\_Change of plans. On to Berk! We'll strike them where we can beat them.\_

I caught the eye of the Terror, and he didn't look controlled to me. He looked more like a loyal second-in-command. Odd that it would be a Terror. But I knew that meant that even if we killed the Red Death, the invasion would continue.

The flock then broke off from us and headed where we had come from.

"Hiccup," began Fishlegs.

"Not good. We need to get back to Berk, and fast," I said, but I knew that we could never catch up to the flock. The barrels were weighing us down, but we needed them. We'd have to go as fast as we could and hope to catch them early into their attack and hope the village was prepared to fight like they always had against the dragons.

And so began the series of unfortunate events that would culminate into the Archipelago War, one of the bloodiest and most complex wars ever fought by Vikings. This was only the beginning of a war that would encompass two species and four armies. And there could be only one winner.

\*\*Now we're getting into the good stuff. Be prepared for some good, long chapters coming up. If anyone has any ideas for specific battles they want to see, leave it in the reviews, and I'll take them into consideration. Please be sure to review. Thanks!\*\*



## 22. The War of 4 Worlds Begins

### The War Begins

We raced back to Berk as fast as possible, but we were too late. By the time we got there, the village was fighting for its life in one of the worst dragon attacks in the history of Berk. Now, on Berk, we were prepared for the average raid, heck, even the full on ones that occurred usually before devastating winter we were prepared for, but nothing could prepare us for this. The dragons were decimating Berk, and we had only shown up five minutes late. All over the island I saw fires, blood, and bodies, dragon and human alike, as the slaughter began.

We deposited the barrels of gunpowder in one of the cliffs underneath the island where they wouldn't get wet or lit up. We didn't want to waste our most valuable resource. After that we raced off to the battle to attempt to remedy the situation.

Toothless and I raced to the commons, and began to yell at everyone to get inside the Great Hall, which was specially designed to not burn, (Although under extreme circumstances it can, and it did. Twice. You can guess who was responsible. The level of clutz I possessed was unmatched) while we fought off the horde. I drew out my sword and shield and began hacking at the swarms of dragons.

I managed to slice through a Nadder's head in one slice, a benefit from my training and the extremely sharp edge of my sword, and moved on to attack a Nightmare that was attempting to attack from behind. This kind of slaughter of dragon life was horrible, and I could feel my tear ducts working as well as my conscious screaming at me, but I had to shut it out. I needed to defend Berk. That was the priority right now, my only mission.

Toothless and I fought back to back, which I could see several of the other dragon trainers doing in respective village centers, but the hordes just kept coming. I attempted to join Astrid, who was fighting on a level below us, but I got sideswiped by a swarm of Terrors and fell off the edge of my level.

I managed to grab onto a passing Gronkle, catching it in the leg, and it immediately tried to get me off. I was holding on with one hand onto a giant dragon that was dragging me through mud, tossing me into buildings, and flinging me around. I couldn't believe how I was managing. I got a second hand on him, and, using a mast from a ship, managed to jump on top of him.

I could hear Toothless yelling for me, and I knew he hated me being away from him.

\_Hiccup! Get back here!\_

"No can do Toothless! We need to split up, we can cover more ground!" I yelled back.

With that, I seized the Gronkle by the ears and took control of its flight pattern.

For those of you that don't know, a Gronkle's ears are very sensitive, and even the slightest touch will make them adjust their flight path to minimize the pain, and this can be used to train, and steer, even the most uncooperative Gronkle. This one was no exception. I put one hand on the Gronkle, controlling him (which he did NOT like) and wielding Thor II in the other hand.

Let me tell you, Thor II was more effective than I thought. It had the effect and accuracy of one of Toothless's shots, but I could use it with my own hands. Dragons fell in scores, and there was still more. It seemed like they were just spawning from the air itself, and everywhere I looked was a never ending horde.

"Thor above, how many of these things can there be!" I yelled.

Apparently my prayer, however subtle, was answered, because not a hundred feet to my left, about a dozen lightning bolts fell from the sky and perfectly struck 12 dragons, killing them instantly. At least, I thought it was Thor until I saw that it was only Aaron and his Skrill, but still, very impressive. I was amazed with the accuracy of the shots, but I knew that a Skrill's lightning was limited without being charged by a storm.

Still the battle raged on, and I was unaware of what to do to stop the carnage. I could go after the Red Death, which meant that she would lose her control over the dragons, but they were still being led by the Terror, who was definitely aware, and most of them looked fairly loyal. Which left me with a dilemma, all while fighting off the dragons with my own two hands and driving an angry Gronkle. I may be modest, but even I can boast about something like that.

I circled around trying to find a place to land, and I spotted Astrid below me, my initial target. I hopped off and we stood back to back, me with my sword in one hand and Thor II in the other.

"This is just like the Isleton Invasion all over again!" I yelled out, trying to lighten the mood.

"You and I remember that invasion very differently," she said, desperately hacking at the swarm.

"There's too many of them! We need to strike at the head!" I yelled.

"I know, I've tried going after the Terror, but I can't find him!"

"I'll get him, you hold down over here!"

And with that, I took a running start and leaped from the level I was at, executed a simple front roll to slow my fall and bounced off the awning on the lower level.

\_Toothless!\_ I yelled, and he appeared underneath me in a flash, quick as thought, as though he had read my mind. We raced off, searching the battleground for one tiny Terror.

\_Toothless, any ideas on how to find this guy?\_

\_ He'll find us, given enough time. Just wait, he'll show his face.\_

We circled around and looked for him, but nothing. Just when I thought I saw his face, we ran across another Skrill. And this one looked intelligent too, which was troubling. He got right in the middle of our flight path and roared a challenge to the sky.

\_Looks like we got a challenger Toothless! Hit him right where it hurts!\_

Toothless took a quick shot to put this upstart down, but was unprepared when the Skrill shot first. Apparently, this one was well versed in combat, which meant that we had our work cut out for us. Toothless and the Skrill traded shots, but they were both able to evade. I took a shot with Thor II, but it was able to dodge that too.

\_He's good Toothless, but we're better. Strike at the same time, ready, three, two, one!\_ I yelled, and we both shot at the same time at the same spot on the Skrill, hoping to get a better shot. Unfortunately, the Skrill shot at the same time, and both shots met in the middle. What resulted was a small blue ball of energy that quickly expanded until it exploded violently in a flash of blue and purple.

Both of us were thrown backward, and there was a crater the size of the explosion below us. It was so terrific and shocking that the fighting momentarily stopped to witness it. I was thrown off of Toothless and into a house. I crashed right through a roof and into one of the upper floor rooms. Looking around, I realized that it was my old room, I could tell by the pictures plastering the walls and the plans scattered around the room. Dad had never taken them down.

As nice as that sentiment was, I needed to get back to the battle. Looking around I saw that Toothless had been thrown into a nearby fire pit, which, thank the gods above a million times, was not lit. He was fine, but his tail fin had been bent to the point of being next to useless. I cursed, knowing full well that put him out of flying commission. I would have to leave him if I wanted to find that stupid Terror.

I raced to get him and help him out of the fire pit. He managed to stumble out with a little help from me, but I knew he was incapacitated.

\_Stay on this level. Deal with these guys here. I'm going after that Thor-forsaken Terror,\_ I said. Toothless was obviously angry, but he could see the wisdom in my statement, and charged right back into the fray.

I jumped off of the level I was on and grabbed a passing Nadder, leaping onto its back. Luckily, this one was under the command of the Queen, and could be snapped out, if only I could figure out how. It was angry at me, but I could almost see the tiny gears in its head turning, fighting the spell. A soft, reassuring hand on its snout was enough to give it the motivation it needed to break free of the spell, and just like that, I had a new friend.

The Nadder and I raced off to the center of the fray, where we could see, and hear, that obnoxious, overgrown lapdog of a Terror barking orders to the other dragons. I needed to keep the Nadder out of its control, and muttering under my breath in Dragonese seemed to do the trick. We flew in close, until the Nadder recognized me. With a careful shot he blew me off the Nadder and off into another house, crashing through the roof.

I groaned, feeling my side, and my hand came away wet. I must have busted a few ribs in that fall, and it hurt like hell. I rolled to my feet, and I was already seeing stars. I could see the Terror charging up a shot, and I knew I was toast.

I tried to evade, but before he could get the shot off, he was blown off his feet by two sharp blasts. I looked over to see Forge and Gobber's old Terror, Knife, leading a horde of Terror's towards the rogue.

I stood with the horde behind me, facing the Terror, ordering the horde to stand down for now.

\_Why?\_ was the very simple question I had.

The Terror simply smirked. \_You are the greatest scourge that this world has ever seen, a disease like no other. You are weak, and now it is time for you to be eliminated. To survive, you must die. Such is the way of the world. I am a patriot, a freedom fighter, and I will not bow down to serve the likes of the scum of the earth that you have become!\_

With that the Terror let out a screech so powerful that I had to cover my ears. A second later, all the Terrors on the island, with the exception of my small horde, surrounded me. We were trapped.

In the midst of it all, I couldn't help but realize that the dragon's had the same idea of us as we had of them. We both, at least the more primitive members, saw each other as a pestilence that had to be killed to survive. Talking it over might have fixed this problem, if this were any other people or species, but we're Vikings, and they're dragons, we have stubbornness issues.

Regardless, we were trapped, with no way out.

The Terror smirked again. \_Now it is your turn to die.\_ Turning to the others he yelled, \_Kill the æ|..\_! I couldn't make out the last word, but I guessed it was some offensive, low level word.

Immediately we were besieged by Terrors on all sides, tearing at open flesh, with no way to escape. Luckily, I saw a small stall that had survived the wreckage and managed to make my way towards it, quickly wrapping myself, Forge, and Knife in the folds of an old tarp.

I pulled out of my pocket a device I had sworn never to use unless under the worst of duress. The greatest weapon that mankind had ever conceived, a bomb that would make all other explosives look like kindling. It was a mixture of all sorts of chemicals, tested and true, that created the best explosion anyone had ever seen, with a blast radius about the size of the Commons, rigged to create an initial explosion, and then a secondary ring of fire, steel, and

brimstone. I called it the Hail Stone. I would have used it on the Red Death, but with the materials were rare, and with the size I had, it wouldn't have made a difference.

With the Terrors tearing to rip through the tarp, I braced myself, threw up the tarp, and launched the bomb as far as I could. Unfortunately, it didn't go nearly far enough, and we would have all been killed by the blast. I cursed.

Knife, seeming to sense my distaste, launched after the Hail Stone, despite my attempts to stop him. He picked it up and moved it to the center of the swarm near the rogue Terror. Before lighting it, I heard him yell out to the Terror and the crowd: *"Peace is the answer! It is better to love these creatures who share so much with us!"* And with that he and the Rogue were gone in a flash of light and smoke.

The shockwave knocked me off my feet, flying backwards again into another house, this time knocking my head against a shield and knocking me out as the Hail Stone unleashed another devastating ring of destruction. My last thought before I passed out was that I hoped and prayed to all the gods that no one else I loved besides poor, poor Knife was killed in the blast. And with that, darkness consumed me.

## 23. Consequences

### Consequences

Groggily, I opened my eyes only to close them almost immediately due to the blinding light in my eyes. After a second for my eyes to adjust, I could see that I was in a temporary infirmary in the Great Hall, a stiff bandage applied to my right arm with some green goop dripping out of it, some sort of medicine. A blaring headache blasted straight through me like a razor sharp knife, finding every sensitive nook and cranny and cranking them into overdrive.

I managed to get up a little, only to be urged to sit back down by a woman holding a jar of water and a rag, telling me to rest. I shrugged her off, despite the blaring headache, and made my way to where I could see my father discussing something with Gobber and, of all people, Spitelout. Stoick had never liked his brother in the same way that I had never liked Spitelout's son, Snotlout, since they were both arrogant and much too sure of themselves to ever be likeable. I was able to catch a snippet of conversation as I walked over.

"*How I'm going to break it to him. I've seen the way he looks at her. He reminds me of myself when I lost Valka,*" I heard Stoick say.

"Who are we talking about?" I said with as much enthusiasm as I could muster, making Stoick visibly jump almost out of skin.

"*Hiccup! you're up! thought you were still out of it! um! how?...I don't know! let me just start over,*" Stoick managed to mutter out.

He took a deep breath and steadying himself. "It's Astrid," was all he said, and a weight in my chest added itself to the stabbing dagger of pain that thrust its way through my head, working in tandem to slowly drive me insane.

"No! No it can't be," I tried to say, and then I saw her, laying calmly and complacently on the table a few rows over. "No. No. NO!" I screamed, racing my way over to her. Tears were streaming from my eyes against my will as I raced over to her side.

Her face was serene, like she was asleep, dreaming of happier times, above the clouds on the back of her faithful companion. Her arms were folded over her chest in a calm, relaxed sort of way, but they were unnaturally splayed, her muscles not supporting them, so they sagged ever so slightly. A bandage was arranged loosely over her right leg and right breast, and a red rose bloomed from both with a sickly beauty, radiating outward and sapping the lifeblood out of the one person in life I had ever truly loved. Lying next to her on the table were three shards of metal, small but deadly, that I recognized as a part from the Hail Stone.

Stoick came over and laid a hand on my shoulder as I grabbed her motionless, lifeless hand and sobbed into her arms.

"No Astrid. Not you. Anyone but you. I! I love you so much," I sobbed. I had never truly admitted it myself to her, we had kissed a little and flirted often, but ours was a slow relationship. We wanted to truly know each other, not rush into it emotionally. But now I wished that we had, just so we could have that time together, to have those memories that I would never make again with her.

"Son, I know it's hard, but we need to pick ourselves up from these ashes and rebuild ourselves. The Queen is still out there, and I'm sure that was only a preliminary attack. I know the trauma that you're going through, I went it too when you were only a babe, and I know how hard it is. Take some time to grieve, but don't let it become you," he said before leaving.

I went back to sobbing over her until I had no more tears to cry, and instead held my head to her chest, wishing that I could have saved her, wishing that I didn't have to use that stupid bomb, and that none of this had ever happened. It was my fault. I did this.

I felt the same shame and hollow emptiness as the day I had shot down Toothless. I did this. I caused this. And now, because of me, she was gone. I knew, then and there, that I would never, could never, love another person again. I knew from the moment I had first laid eyes on her that she was the one, and now that one was no more.

I got up to leave, but Toothless shuffled over to me with a look in his eyes that just told me that I needed to stay a little bit, for him. Toothless and Astrid had become close over the years, and he felt a special connection to her as well. Not, of course, as strong as his connection to me, but strong nonetheless.

\_I'm sorry Hiccup. I loved her too. We need to be strong, for her.\_

I nodded and sniffled, and I could see tears forming in that old reptile's eyes. Could dragon's cry? It was a question I had never

quite asked myself, but now I knew.

I got up to leave, and as a farewell to my love. I gave her a kiss on her unfeeling, unmoving lips, a deep kiss like the one we hadn't shared in quite a while. Fresh tears sprang to my eyes, and they splashed unbidden upon her perfect, pale cheeks.

Suddenly, Toothless's ear plates perked up, and he shuffled over to her side. His ear plates swiveled constantly in a way that I had only ever seen once, when he listened for the Queen, his eyes darting all over the specimen that lay on the table before him.

\_Toothless? You alright?\_ I asked.

Worried, I looked over Astrid, and she still looked as she had, unchanged. I tried to question Toothless, but he was focused. I threw myself over her body in desperation, tired and upset at the world.

Through my renewed sobbing, a surprising sound reached my ears. It was a soft throbbing, so soft I barely noticed it. I tried to think of what it was, but I was too caught up in my angsty haze. Suddenly, it dawned on me, and I sat up straight. The lifeless body of Astrid shuddered slightly, and her body gave a small, almost imperceptible cough.

"Astrid! Oh gods!" I cried out, hugging her and sobbing again, but for a totally different reason now. These were tears of immense joy. "I thought I lost you forever."

"You can't get rid of me that easy," she coughed out, and was immediately out again, the loss of blood a strain on her consciousness. She was alive. I nearly collapsed from the pain of it all. My worst fear wasn't real, she was still with me.

She was still losing a lot, a LOT of blood. I called over Gothi as quickly as I could, and she hobbled over ever so slowly and ploddingly. I explained the situation to her, and she began drawing in the dirt on the floor of the Great Hall. Then, with her stick, she summoned Gobber over to interpret.

"Why couldn't ye teach someone else this stuff. Fishlegs knows it, but why not someone else. I'm always stuck with translating," Gobber said, and was immediately smacked by Gothi in a tone that, vaguely, said 'watch it mister'.

"Before we start, sorry about the loss kid. I know it's hard butâ€¦"

>"She's alive Gobber," I said, and his eyes went wide. He took off his helmet and bent down to her chest and listened.<p>

"Yep, there's a beat there. Very faint though, she's probably lost a lot of blood." He took a glance at the drawings and nodded.

"Uh huhâ€¦yupâ€¦okay. So what Gothi is saying is that the wounds need to be heat sealed in order to stop the blood loss. She says that the leg wound is much worse however, and that it is already showing signs of infection. If it gets any worse, we may have toâ€¦" He need not finish the sentence.

"Gobber grab the stoker by the fire pit. Toothless, get ready bud, I'm going need some fire. Fishlegs, Snotlout, get over here and hold down Astrid!" I yelled, urging people to move along as Astrid's lifeblood seeped out of her.

"Why, may I ask, are we holding her down?" asked Fishlegs.

"Because she's alive, and she's losing a lot of blood," I said, and I saw both Snotlout and Fishleg's eyes widen.

I grabbed the rod and had Toothless heat it to white hot before signaling to the boys to hold her down. "I'm sorry Astrid, but this is going to hurt."

I pressed the rod to the leg wound first, since it was larger, and her entire body writhed as if she were in the throes of a seizure. A guttural scream was wrenched from her soul and thrown into the air like a banshee. It made me sick to hear, and tears streamed from my eyes as I applied pressure, and the pain increased.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" I yelled through misting eyes as I closed the wounds, and that screaming increased in volume until it tore my heart out.

It was over in a few minutes, but the emotional toll on my body was just too much. She fell back into her comatose state quickly after, no signs of her previous duress but the red, inflated wound that no longer leaked red.

"Ah, don't worry kid. She won't remember a thing. Hell, I didn't, and they did it to me twice," said Gobber, gesturing to his missing arm and leg.

"I know Gobber. It still hurts though. And I'm going to make that Queen pay with every ounce of her blood for this Gobber. You can be sure of that."

\*\*Just a little feels/Hiccstrid moment for ya'll. I realize that I've been negligent of Hiccstrid that I promised in this story, so hopefully this helps. Also, to those of you who think everything is happening to inflate Hiccup, it is. And it's all about to come crashing down. Oh I wish I could see your faces when I unveil all the pain I'm going to inflict. MUWAHAHAHAH!\*\*

End  
file.